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W. Hodgson

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A
NARRATIVE
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE SOCIETY CALLED QUAKERS,
WITHIN THE
QUARTERLY MEETING
FOR
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX,
AGAINST
THOMAS FOSTER,
FOR OPENLY PROFESSING THEIR PRIMITIVE DOCTRINES
Concerning the
UNITY OF GOD.

“The first of all the commandments is :—Hear, O Israel ! the Lord our God is **ONE LORD** —The true worshippers shall worship **THE FATHER** in spirit, and in truth. For **THE FATHER** seeketh such to worship **HIM.**” *Jesus Christ.*

“After the way which *they* call heresy, so worship I **THE GOD** of my fathers.” *Paul.*

“For the service of Jesus of Nazareth, is the service of **THE GOD** and **FATHER** of Jesus of Nazareth.” *William Penn.*

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P R E F A C E.



IF the proceedings detailed in the ensuing pages, were of no importance except as they relate to myself, it would be wholly unnecessary to publish them. I am content under their operation. But I could not remain silent, believing that, if the principles on which these proceedings are founded were generally acted upon, it would tend to the exclusion of many from a Society, for the welfare of which I am still solicitous, and even a small minority might discard and disown the far greater part of its members, as unsound in the faith. This, I am aware, is only matter of opinion, and I state it as such. It has, however, been derived from the information which attention to the subject, for more than thirty years, has afforded. Within that period, also, I have known persons in every station in the Society, ministers, elders and overseers, openly and decidedly advocating the doctrine of the strict Unity

and essential placability of God, without any censure from the church. Hence I concluded these were *still* the doctrines of the Society, as I, in early life, considered them to be those of its most eminent writers, obscure and mystical as some parts of their works undoubtedly are.

I have found, however, by experience, that in the judgment of the Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, of which I was a member, according to the usual, but uncertain mode of declaring such judgment, the open profession of such truly Christian and Scriptural doctrines, *is no longer to be tolerated*. But I have, understood, since the decision of the latter of those Meetings, that it has been said, "that the ground of the Meeting's judgment, was not the scruples, the doubts, the opinions, which Thomas Foster entertained, *but his injudicious proclamation of them.*" That "had he kept them to himself, or spoken of them, *in proper places only, and at proper times,* he might have been a member of the Society to this day." These are the sentiments of a man, who must have been well acquainted with the secret springs of action, and with the grounds of a decision, which were not explained in the Meeting, nor likely to have been otherwise generally known.

Had my offences been described to the Quarterly Meeting, as consisting in such indiscretions as these, they might not have been declared by that Meeting, deserving of the severest punish-

ment the Society has power to inflict. For, after all, what is their amount? That in declaring my views of Christian truth, I paid more regard to the plain positive command of our great Master, to publish his doctrines on the house top, than to the miserable calculations of fallible men, about proper times and places. In short, that I refused, in matters of faith and worship, to call any man master, upon earth.

I am aware, I have often given similar cause of offence, to those rulers in the church, who are governed by such worldly and temporising maxims, the commandments of men. The ensuing pages state the *ostensible* grounds of the proceedings against me, but as other topics of complaint were frequently alleged, particularly, “the sentiments I had occasionally expressed, in Meetings for Discipline,” as noticed, p. 63, &c. I will here state, generally, what those sentiments were, from which my accusers inferred, that I was actuated by a hostile disposition towards the Society. Yet so far as I imagine they can have given offence, they have I may venture to say, been, uniformly in favour of what I considered Christian truth, or in defence of Christian liberty. For instance:—

In the year 1799, a proposition was brought up to the Yearly Meeting, respecting the propriety of lending our meeting-houses to persons of other Societies. It was discussed, at two sittings, and resulted in a

minute, declaring “that our meeting-houses *should not be lent* to the ministers of other Societies, *who do not profess to depend on divine direction, in every step taken in worship and ministry.*”

The extravagant, exclusive pretensions which this minute set up, and the great illiberality which it indicated, induced me warmly to oppose it, unaccustomed as I was to speak in so large an assembly.

Many others opposed this measure, but in vain ; for the Friends round the table, *declared it to be the sense of the Meeting*, that this restriction on those who were otherwise minded, *should pass into a law*. It is recorded in the Book of Extracts, p. 85, 86.

My earnest opposition to this minute, I consider as the first offence I had publicly given to the leading disciplinarians in the Society. And it is remarkable, that my excellent friend, Hannah Barnard, to whom I was then a total stranger, first offended them, by impressively bearing her testimony against this truly sectarian, and unchristian regulation.

Continuing to be dissatisfied with this rule, on the 22nd of March, 1801, I urged Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, in a regular, constitutional manner, but without success, to forward a proposition to the Quarterly Meeting, and through that, to the Yearly Meeting, for reconsidering, amending, or repealing the said rule, which I then stated to be, as I still consider it, highly injurious to the reputation of the Society.

At the Yearly Meeting in 1801, a rule was made, which directed “*that no books concerning the princi-*

ples of Friends be printed, without being carefully read, and corrected, if necessary, by the Morning Meeting in London." In the first edition of the Book of Extracts, p. 15, a minute in the same words is inserted, to which the dates 1679, 1672 are annexed, importing that it was agreed to by the Yearly Meeting, in one of those years. Having strong reason to believe, that the minutes of that Meeting concerning books, in those years, were of a very different import, I inquired in the Meeting, on what authority that minute was inserted. *J. G. Bevan* at length replied, that the records had been searched, and no such minute was to be found, under either of those dates, or any other that he could discover. He therefore proposed that it should be omitted. This was however objected to, and after several attempts to give this new rule the air of antiquity, *by antedating it*, an ingenious device to accomplish the same object, by prefixing a preface to it, *was adopted*. In this "the revision of manuscripts by the second day's Morning Meeting," was represented as "the ancient and approved practice of our religious Society," and the Yearly Meeting declared it to be its judgment, "that the said practice *be invariably observed*." Yet the genuine minutes of 1672—1679, related solely to the revision of such works as were printed at the expence of the Society, and gave no right of controul over its members, with respect to any other publications. The detection and exposure of this *pious fraud*, or ecclesiastical forgery, would of course form one item

among my offences. This rule I consider as having been since *virtually* repealed, as I would have shewn, *inter aliis*, if I had been permitted, as an appellant to examine the records of the Yearly Meeting. See p. 126.

At the same Yearly Meeting, notwithstanding the imposition of silence on the members of the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex, in breach of a positive engagement with Hannah Barnard; I publicly expressed to the Meeting my entire disapprobation of its decision on her case. Soon after this, I published, "An Appeal to the Society of Friends, on the primitive simplicity of their Christian principles and church discipline," in three parts.

In the first part I designed to promote the cause of truth, and the best interests of the Society, by holding up to their view such sound, liberal, and scriptural doctrines of its early and most distingusshed authors, as appeared to me to have been of late years, most misunderstood, misrepresented, or forgotten. The manner in which I did this, was, I imagined the best I could adopt, as an *argumentum ad hominem*, by exhibiting the doctrines in question, in the words of those authors, with references to the passages quoted. In doing this, totally inexperienced as I was in the business of authorship, and connected as many of the passages I had occasion to cite, were with other subjects, it was difficult, within any moderate bounds, to adduce such as were to my purpose,

without rendering myself liable to a charge of making partial and uncandid quotations.

The principal subjects which I was anxious to impress upon my readers, in this tract were, 1st, "the important doctrine of the entire and undivided unity of the Deity." 2ndly. That the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the sacred writers, was untenable, and necessarily tended to decrease the credit and influence of the Scriptures, "*those most excellent of all writings.*" 3rdly. The simplicity, and sufficiency of the conditions of religious fellowship in the primitive Christian church, *as laid down in the New Testament*, with the disadvantages which would necessarily follow, from the adoption of more extended articles of faith, as the requisite terms of Christian communion.

A few months after, I published the second part of the "Appeal." In this I traced out, principally from the minutes of the Yearly Meeting, the following conclusive evidence of the systematic extension of the power and influence of the meetings of ministers and elders, and the consequent dissolution of their former connection with, and regular subordination to, the Meetings for Discipline. To these they were, previous to the year 1784, nothing but standing committees, required to present to the Quarterly Meetings for Discipline, every three months, *reports relative to their own conduct*, and to the manner in which they had transacted the business *entrusted to their care*. Till this time, it does not appear, that they

even kept any record of the names of the persons, who were, from time to time, appointed on these committees. But it was now directed, “ that the Monthly Meetings of ministers and elders, should transmit, to the Quarterly Meetings of ministers and elders, a list of the names of their members, *to be kept there, on record.*”

The Yearly Meeting having thus enabled these committees to keep up a marked and permanent distinction, between their own members, and the rest of their brethren, in religious profession, and constituted them *Meetings of record*, ordered, in 1786, “ that in future, the representatives to the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders, be such, *as are in the station of elders, or ministers, where elders cannot be found.* And that Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of ministers and elders, *be very cautious*, how they admit any, besides those who are proper members, (*viz. ministers in unity*, with their respective Meetings, and *appointed elders*,) *to sit in those Meetings*, that the freedom necessary to be exercised therein, in a watchful care over each other, *may not be interrupted.*” These committees were thus rendered in their collective capacity, an insulated body, equally removed from inspection and controul. The same Yearly Meeting also directed, “ that in future, the answers (to the queries) be transmitted from the Quarterly, to the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders, *without passing through the Quarterly Meetings for Discipline*, with this provision, that the same may be call-

ed for, by the said Quarterly Meetings. Nevertheless, it is not intended to discontinue the practice of reporting to the Meetings for Discipline, *how such Meetings have been conducted.*"

Previous to this time, these "answers to the queries," were directed to "be entered in writing, that the state of the ministry and elders, collected from such reports, be laid before the Quarterly Meeting of the county, *for their approbation*, and *by that be sent* to the Meeting of ministers and elders in London, *annually* by one or two representatives, *appointed to attend the said Meeting.*" In 1789, the Yearly Meeting decided "that overseers, under that appointment only, *are not entitled to sit in Meetings of ministers and elders.*" And in 1790, the following minute was made:—"The manner of appointing representatives to the Yearly Meeting of ministers and elders, coming again under the weighty consideration of this Meeting, *it is recommended, that the same be, in future, made in the select Quarterly Meetings.*" There still remained some appearance of the former subjection of these select Meetings, to the Meetings for Discipline, in the concluding provision of the minute of 1786, above quoted. This was removed by the Yearly Meeting in 1801, which directed, that the reports from the Quarterly select Meetings, to the Quarterly Meetings for Discipline, should, in future, not be, "*how such Meetings have been conducted,*" but "*that they have been held.*"

Thus were these committees of the Meetings for

Discipline, gradually made, by their own individual influence and voice, in the Yearly Meeting, almost independent of their constituents. Thus did they, at length, become such a distinct and separate body, in the church, as the New Testament *neither sanctions by precept, nor example.*

The second part of the "Appeal," exhibited also the associated body of ministers and elders, for Great Britain and Ireland, with all their recently acquired prerogatives, as coming forward in its collective capacity, as the accuser of *Hannah Barnard*, and in a character totally new, as well as equally improper, and unconstitutional, for such an assembly to appear in. After devoting three sittings to this cause, it "referred the farther attention to the case—to the Morning Meeting of ministers and elders in London." The efforts of this Meeting, and of its committee, are also stated in this part of the Appeal, with its addition of three fresh articles, in support of the original accusation, and its presentation of the whole, to a Meeting for Discipline.

It being declared by a rule of the Society, in 1735, "that neither the Morning Meeting, nor any other meeting of ministers, have power to disown *any minister*, or other person, *in any capacity whatever*," it is plain that this powerfully influential body, could not well accomplish, of itself, the end it had in view.

The progress and consequences of its accusation, are detailed at considerable length, in the third part

of the Appeal, and I must confess, I have never seen reason to doubt the folly and absurdity of setting up an uniformity of belief, with regard to the divine sanction for the Jewish wars, as a necessary condition of religious fellowship, in a Christian church, or as a qualification for a gospel minister. In this part of the Appeal I have likewise shewn, that the grounds of accusation were most sedulously kept out of sight, on Hannah Barnard's appeal to the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex, to the certain encouragement of tale-bearing and detraction, and that a majority of the persons, chosen to be judges of her appeal to the Yearly Meeting, were members of the accusing body, and yet accepted such an office, and acted as her judges, in defiance of the most obvious dictates of justice and equity. On these, and various other grounds, I expressed, as I felt, my strong disapprobation of the Yearly Meeting's decision on this occasion. Nor do I consider myself, even supposing I was mistaken in my judgment, as justly censurable, on that account, by any Christian society.

Soon after the publication of the third part of the Appeal, a Reply to the first part made its appearance, in the spring of 1802, under the signature of Vindex, generally attributed to *J. G. Bevan*. This writer does not allege that my quotations from the works of our early Friends, were false, but that they were "partial evidence." That I contented myself with quoting what was to my "*purpose*," and omit-

ting, he calls it, "*concealing*, the rest," and that I esteemed these "old authors—as *having been men liable to err*, and whose works need *examination*, and **DISCRIMINATION**." Yet no sooner does he enter upon his "Examination," of the first of my quotations from two of Penn's tracts, written within one year, than he gives up, as impracticable, all ideas of "*reconciling the two books together*, which," says he, the writer of the Appeal "*attempts, and in which, I think, he fails*." He adds p. 3:—"To be sure, *need enough there is for a new dictionary*, if we *must* make it [Penn's Innocency with her open Face,] *perfectly consistent with the Sandy Foundation Shaken*."

My rejoinder was published early in 1803, entitled "A Vindication of Scriptural Unitarianism, and some other primitive Christian Doctrines, in Reply to Vindex's Examination of an Appeal to the Society of Friends." The reader of the ensuing pages, may form his own estimate concerning this work, by the extracts adduced from it, as supplementary accusations against me. They are inserted p. 192—199.

In 1804, I published "A Narrative of the Proceedings in America, of the Society called Quakers, in the Case of Hannah Barnard." To this I prefixed, as the Appeal was out of print, "A Brief Review of the previous Transactions in Great Britain and Ireland." The motives which induced

me to publish this Narrative, were similar to those which occasioned the publication of the Appeal.

A work, entitled, "A Defence of the Christian Doctrines of the Society of Friends, *against the Charge of Socinianism*, &c. in answer to a Writer who stiles himself Verax," was published in 1805, by John Bevans. The very title of this work is calculated to mislead, for Verax never alleged such a charge against the Society. ✓

Circumstances of a painful nature, prevented an earlier reply, but with returning tranquillity of mind, after severe affliction, I again recurred to the controversy, stimulated by the official distribution of hand-bills, from house to house, with the Yearly Meeting Epistles for 1806 and 1807, advertising this work.

It was the manner in which it was sanctioned and patronized, although published, in open yet justifiable defiance of the new *Imprimatur* rule, rather than the character, the temper, or any other quality it possessed deserving notice, that induced me to publish a reply. My answer was printed in 1808, entitled, "Christian Unitarianism vindicated."

The reader will see, that I refused to inform my accusers whether I wrote the above works, on their interrogating me respecting them, after I was accused on other grounds. If even the original charge against me had been, that I had written and published those tracts, I might reasonably have replied,—prove the fact,—no man is bound to accuse ✓

himself. And when this point was established, without my evidence, I might rightfully have called upon my accusers, to shew what evil I had thereby committed, and what law I had transgressed. But I now consider it right to acknowledge that I did write and publish them.

The reader will also find some passages adduced against me, by way of crimination, from the last mentioned work, which are inserted p. 199 to 205. To his judgment I refer them, adding however, from the Preface, a statement of the principal objects I aimed at promoting, by that publication: viz:—

1st, To maintain the infinitely important doctrines of the strict Unity and natural placability of God, as taught in the Scriptures, in opposition to the Trinitarian and Calvinistic tenets, which have recently been professed, and in some degree countenanced, amongst us.

2dly, To promote more just and reasonable ideas on the doctrine of divine influence on the human mind, than I apprehend many of my fellow professors at present entertain.

3dly, To excite an increased attention to the Scriptures, and thereby to augment their influence in favour of moral and religious truth, to which, I think, the unfounded idea of their plenary inspiration, is prejudicial.

4thly, To inculcate the obligation we are under, as professed Christians, primarily to regard the simplicity of the apostolic faith, in determining the

conditions on which religious fellowship ought to be maintained; and, consequently, to abstain from the imposition upon our brethren, of more extended articles of faith, than Jesus Christ, and his apostles have laid down as sufficient.

Before the publication of this work, I had long lamented the low and defective state of scriptural knowledge, amongst the members of our Society, generally speaking, including many of its ministers, of which the frequent incorrectness of their quotations from scripture, in their public ministry, affords sufficient proof. I, therefore suggested in p. 201, the probable advantages of “the public appropriation of a certain portion of time to the express purpose of communicating religious instruction, in which the reading of the Christian scriptures might be introduced, *and form a principal part.*” How far this recommendation, and my reasoning in its favour, either in this work, or when I made a similar proposal to the Yearly Meeting in 1809, has been reckoned among my offences, I cannot say. But I am so fully impressed with the necessity of some such plan, in order to promote the proper ends of religious association, that I cannot forbear pressing it, once more, upon the attention of the Society.

In doing this, I would remind them how necessary a piece of furniture in a place of worship, *George Fox* considered *a Bible*. He made presents of Bibles to several Meetings, probably to many, and one of these Bibles was, till a few years ago, *chained to the preach-*

ers gallery, in the meeting-house at Swarthmore. By whose order, or why it was removed, I know not. But I conclude it was so attached to a place of worship, in order that it might *be used there*. And why should it not, as well as in the families of Friends ?

“ We believe,” says the Yearly Meeting, in its Epistle for 1807, “ there is an increased attention in Friends *in various parts*, not only to promote in their families, the frequent reading of the holy scriptures, but to make it the employment of a portion of time *daily*. We commend this practice, and we believe, there will be *so little danger* of the custom becoming *formal*, that it will *not unfrequently* be the means of quickening the minds of those concerned in it : more especially, *if a subsequent pause be allowed* ; in order that the sacred truths which have been read, *may have time to make their due impression on the mind* ; or that the mind *may have time to rise in secret aspiration after a blessing*.”

Now, I would submit it to any candid and intelligent mind, that if such beneficial consequences as these, may be justly expected from this practice, whether, still more extensive advantages would not be likely to arise, from the public, as well as the private reading of the sacred writings ? Under proper regulations there would be, at least, as little “ danger of the custom *becoming formal*,” and it might not less frequently be the means of instruction and edification, even to many who very much neglect reading the Scriptures, and are seldom in the way

of hearing them read, with becoming seriousness and solemnity. As the Yearly Meeting believed such desirable results might be more especially looked for, "*if a subsequent pause be allowed,*" when can those writings, "*which are able to make wise unto salvation,*" be more profitably read, than immediately preceding the times set apart for *solemn, silent worship?* During such seasons, "the sacred truths which have been read, may have time to make their due impression on the mind," at least *as fully*, and *more generally*, than could be well expected at any other. And after such opportunities of receiving religious instruction, "the mind may have time to rise in secret aspiration after a blessing," and be the better enabled to offer up, a pure offering of prayer, thanksgiving, or praise, to "the Father of lights, the Giver of every good, and every perfect gift."

"Christian duty is not a complex system," says the same Epistle, "but consists of a few and simple parts—it is a peculiar glory of the gospel, that it remains THE SAME. Love to God, and love to our neighbour, are its grand and primary divisions; each harmonizing with the other; neither subsisting apart." But these simple and sublime views of Christian duty, seem to be wholly forgotten, when the rulers of churches set up uniformity of sentiment, on numerous, or unscriptural articles of faith, as necessary to religious fellowship.

The Yearly Meeting, in 1806, entrusted the compilation of a catechism, to the Meeting for Sufferings, which was accordingly drawn up, by a sub-

committee, consisting of three of its members. The work was presented to the next Yearly Meeting, which, after referring it to a large committee for revision and correction, ordered the first part to be printed. It is entitled. "Early Christian Instruction, in the form of a dialogue between a mother and a child, written at the desire of the Society of Friends." Phillips. London, 1807.

The subject was recommitted to the farther attention of the Meeting for Sufferings, which reported, in 1808, that further progress had been made, but that the second part of the catechism was not completed. It was once more referred to their care, by minute, but another year's consideration, satisfied that Meeting, that it would not be prudent, or expedient, to commit its own credit, or that of the Yearly Meeting, by entering, in the manner proposed, into any very minute statement of articles of faith, and publishing the same, on behalf of the Society, and in its name. The Yearly Meeting coincided in their report, and judgment, that it was too nice an undertaking to be carried into effect, and the project was accordingly dropped. I was present, and cordially expressed my concurrence with this determination. But how such a decision can be deemed compatible with the proceedings in my case, I do not know.

The manner in which several of the Quarterly and Yearly Meeting queries, are usually answered, I have long thought to have a natural tendency to nourish a pharisaic spirit, than which, nothing is more opposed to the genuine spirit of Christianity.

Nor did any thing appear to call forth more severe reproof from our great Master, who best knew, what was the most pernicious and delusive inhabitant of the human breast, than the conduct of those, who, under a sanctimonious profession of religion, stood aloof from their brethren, and thanked God, they were not like other men, nor even as this, or that publican.

The first part of the 2nd query, is peculiarly difficult to answer, in any useful manner, or to any good purpose. “*Is there among you any growth in the truth?*” Not satisfied to answer this query, with becoming modesty, and in *general* terms, the leading disciplinarians mostly contrive, by descending to particulars, to pay themselves an implied compliment, by adding a few words, importing, that what “growth in the truth,” is stated to have taken place, is almost wholly confined to a very small part of the flock.

I several times called the attention of the Yearly Meeting, a few years since, to so improper a mode of answering this query, by many of the Quarterly Meetings, at that time, although the rules direct, that “the words of the queries be kept to,” as much as possible, in answering them. I would not venture, I told the Meeting, to say, that such answers to the query, arose from a pharisaic spirit, but I had no hesitation in saying, they had a natural tendency to produce such a temper of mind. To such men as my accusers, or their *concealed prompters*, I am not

surprised that this *plain speaking* should have given offence, their accusation *soon followed*.

Before I conclude this preface, I would add a few words, to point out the effects, already produced by these proceedings:—They have encouraged a spirit of religious enquiry, far beyond what any mere efforts of mine could have done. They have excited amongst the *Friends*, an increased attention to the works circulated by the London Unitarian *Book Society*, and to a much greater extent, within my knowledge, than I had previously anticipated, as likely so soon to have taken place.

To proscribe such writings, at this time of day, is one of the surest means of promoting their circulation. The time for exercising such tyranny over the mind, is gone by, and I trust will never return. My accusers have, therefore, unconsciously lent their aid, to render my feeble efforts more effectual, than they could otherwise have been. Nor have they at all damped my zeal, or palsied my exertions. No, they have increased both. They have taught me to feel still more powerfully the value and importance, of those Christian principles; for openly professing which, I have been accused, and disowned.

As to the charge that I aided in the circulation of some Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1810, it is, if any thing, still more futile and weak than the other. The only way to secure those annual epistles from such attacks, is, to render them, in future, sound and scriptural. Then will they be invulnerable. But to disown those who write and circu-

late sober and serious remarks on them, is to indicate a secret suspicion, that they will not bear examination, that they are not fitted to endure such a trial, that some parts of them are built upon a sandy foundation. It tends also to multiply those attacks. Nor does it, in any degree, put those epistles out of the reach of criticism. The Remarks on the Epistles for 1811, and 1812, which have been published, since these proceedings commenced, sufficiently prove this. They are inserted in the Monthly Repository, vol. vi. p. 716, and vol. vii. p. 611, and 693.

“Why should we,” says Thomas Clarkson, in his Portraiture of Quakerism, vol. ii. p. 109—110, “consider our neighbour as *an alien*, and load him with reproaches; because he happens to differ from us, in opinion about an article of faith? As long as there are men, so long there will be different measures of talents and understanding; and so long will they view things in a different light, and come to different conclusions concerning them. The eye of one man can see further than another. So can the human mind, on the subject of speculative truths. This consideration should teach us humility and forbearance, in judging of the religion of others. For who is he, who can say that he sees the furthest, or that his own system is the best? If such men as Milton, Whiston, Boyle, Locke and Newton, all agreeing in the profession of Christianity, did not all think precisely alike concerning it, who art thou, with thy inferior capacity, who settest up the standard of thy own judgment, as infallible?”

“ If—thy neighbour—does not agree, in his creed, with thee, know that he judges according to the best of his abilities, *and that no more will be required of him.* Know, also, that thou thyself judgest like a worm of the earth ; that thou dishonourest the Almighty by thy reptile notions of him ; and that in making him accord with thee, in condemning one of his creatures, for what thou conceivest to be the misunderstanding of a speculative proposition, thou treatest him like a man, as thou thyself art, with corporeal organs, with irritable passions, and with a limited intelligence. But if, besides this, thou condemnest thy neighbour in this world also, and feelest the spirit of persecution towards him, know that whatever thy pretensions may be to religion, *thou art not a Christian.*”

I shall only add, that variations of opinion on speculative points of doctrine, will always exist, to a considerable extent, in every church, however rigidly they may be proscribed, and that if such intolerant principles, as were adopted in the proceedings to which the following pages relate, were generally acted upon, they would tend to divide the Society into two classes, to neither of which, would any man, of a liberal independent mind, chuse to belong, nor ought either of these classes to be known in a Christian church—*those who exercise lordship and authority over the consciences of their brethren, and those who tamely submit to such anti-christian domination.*

INTRODUCTION.

The New Testament contains so clear and perspicuous an account of the conditions of religious fellowship, in the primitive Christian church, that it implies a strange disregard of its authority, or great inattention, for any society of Christians, to exercise such powers of exclusion from membership, as are not warranted by any precept, or example of the apostolic age, but are at variance with both.

Experience, however, proves this to have been generally the case, wherever any system of discipline has been established among Christians. The rulers in churches, so constituted, appear to have imagined the right to exclude their brethren from membership, was as absolute and extensive, as that of any club, or civil society, over its members, limited only by its rules, their own arbitrary will, and the law of the land. This antichristian power, founded as it is on a false principle, seems to have been as openly claimed, on many occasions, by the leading disciplinarians in the Society called Quakers, as by any persons whatever.

They do not seem to be aware that a religious society may adopt such intolerant measures towards

its members, as are inconsistent with the character of a true Christian church, without exercising greater powers than may belong to an associated body, in civil society. But so far as any church, professing to be Christian, attempts to impose upon any of its members unscriptural tenets, on pain of disownment, or acts towards them in opposition to the precepts of the New Testament, in such proportion does it cease to be a Christian society, and depart from the inimitable model of the primitive Christian church.

The scriptural records seem indeed to have been much less attended to by George Fox, in framing that system of discipline, which was established in the Society called Quakers, than to the impressions on his own mind concerning it. This is evident from his own account: "Then I was moved of the Lord," says he, that is, in the year 1666, "to recommend the setting up of five Monthly Meetings of men and women in the city of London, besides the women's meetings, and the Quarterly Meetings, *to take care of God's glory*, and to admonish and exhort such as walked disorderly, or carelessly, and not according to truth. For whereas Friends had only Quarterly Meetings, now truth was spread, and Friends grown more numerous, I was moved to recommend the setting up of Monthly Meetings throughout the nation. And the Lord opened to me *what I must do*, and *how* the men's and women's Monthly and Quarterly Meetings should be ordered and established, in this, and other nations; and that I should write to those, where I came not, to do the same." Fox's Journal, p. 390, 391.

In corresponding language, the Yearly Meeting, in 1675, says, "It is our judgment and testimony, in the word of God's wisdom, that the rise and practice, setting up and establishment, of men's and women's meetings, in the church of Christ, in this

our generation, is according to the mind and counsel of God, and done in the ordering and leading of his eternal spirit; and that it is the duty of all Friends and brethren, in the power of God, in all parts to be diligent therein, and to encourage and further each other, in that blessed work." Extracts from the minutes and advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, p. 42, commonly called the Book of Extracts.

Having been themselves severely persecuted on account of their religious opinions, and the open profession of them, they carefully avoided, in the administration of the discipline they set up, all infringement of the rights of conscience, with regard to speculative points of doctrine, on which their writings evince there was amongst themselves, as there always has been, and probably will be, among persons of much reflexion, some considerable difference in sentiment, but with them not more than might have been the case, had they unwisely attempted to establish a creed. The system was soon tinctured with the fanaticism of the age, and became in some respects, more intolerant, than the most zealous disciplinarians in the Society, would now venture to justify. To remind them of a few instances of this kind, may, and I hope will, suggest the propriety of re-examining some principles and practices which are still acted upon, and might be relinquished, greatly to the advantage, and credit of the Society.

It appears that Monthly Meetings, pursuant to the advice of Quarterly Meetings, have issued such recommendations as the following:—"That where any Friends' children join *any of the world in marriage*, that Friends stand clear of giving them *any portion or part of their estate*, until they do unfeignedly repent of their *evil action and example*." The minute from whence the above extract is made, may

be found in the records of Hardshaw Monthly Meeting, in p. 89, and is dated 5th Month, 6th, 1695. This Monthly Meeting was then large, including as it does still, the particular Meetings of Friends, at Liverpool, Manchester, Warrington, &c.

Parents were even required, in those times, upon pain of disownment, to comply with the advice of the Quarterly Meeting, "that no parents, or masters, retain in their families, such their children, or servants, as are, for their disorderliness, denied by Friends." Ibid, p. 111, 12th Month, 15th, 1697. It was natural, that such unchristian requisitions should either be resisted, or very reluctantly complied with. In one instance, two Friends were appointed, by minute, 4th Month, 21st, 1698, to visit one Richard Cubban, for having "taken his daughter Sarah into his house, contrary to the former advice of Friends—and to advise him to a full compliance with *Friends' order.*"

The effect of this visit, is thus described in the minute of the following Meeting, held 5th Month, 19th. "Richard Cubban acquainteth Friends that *he will endeavour*, to answer their advice concerning his daughter." The minute of the next Meeting, held 6th Month, 16th, on this case, is as follows: "No account being brought, of what Richard Cubban hath done in relation to his daughter, account is expected from Friends of Bicursteth, at our next Meeting." On 7th Month, 20th, the Meeting was again held, when three Friends "*are ordered* to speak further to Richard Cubban, to know, why he doth not fully comply with the advice of Friends, relating to his daughter Sarah, and to give account at our next Meeting." This was held 8th Month, 18th, when the following record was made: "The Friends appointed, having been with Richard Cubban, and his answer not being *fully* to the satisfaction of this

Meeting, they are appointed again to visit him, and his wife, together with" seven other friends.

What a picture of church power does this minute exhibit? A committee of no less than *ten men*, appointed to visit the parents of poor Sarah Cubban, to incite them, against their own inclination, to act such a part towards her. The minutes are wholly silent respecting the nature of her offence; whether she had married "*one of the world*," as it was the fashion of the times to describe those of a different profession of faith, cannot, I suppose, be now ascertained. But whatever might have been her offence, her parents were the only suitable judges of the propriety of still extending towards her the protection of their parental roof, and thus contribute towards her reformation, if such she needed.

It does not appear from the Meeting's records, that she had transgressed the moral law, at all. If she had, it is most probable it would have appeared. But the heart-rending effect of the dread of disownment, is thus emphatically described by a minute of the next Monthly Meeting, held 9th mo. 1698, recording the labours of the ten Friends. "The Friends appointed to visit Richard Cubban and his wife, &c. give account *that there was a submission*, and a free acknowledgment that Friends' advice was just, and therefore it is hoped, *that it will, in a little time be answered.*"

In another instance, within the same Monthly Meeting, seven Friends were appointed, 3rd month, 17th, 1698, "to speak with Samuel Dunbabin, Sen. and advise him to comply with *the order of Friends*, relative to his disorderly sons." The reluctance of himself and his wife, to comply with this "order of Friends," is thus expressed in the Meeting's minute of 8th month, 18th, 1698. "Account is given, that Samuel Dunbabin, Sen. and his wife, contrary

to the advice of Friends, *say they cannot put away their sons from them*; therefore a paper is drawn to disown them. William Barnes, William Croudson, and Christopher Winn, are appointed to shew it them, before it go forth."

In this instance, as in the former, the slavish fear of disownment seems to have overpowered the sense of parental duty and affection. For in the Meeting's records of 10th mo. 20th, 1698, it is said, "Account is given, that after reading *the paper of judgment* to Samuel Dunbabin and his wife, *they have submitted*, and complied with Friends' advice, *and put their sons from their house*, and sent a paper thereof to this Meeting, which is ordered to be *kept*, and therefore the paper of judgment is stayed from going forth, and is ordered to be kept with the book."

Such were the powers, which disciplinarians in the Society, called Quakers, once thought themselves warranted to exercise. Nor was such an extension of church authority confined to small, or obscure Monthly Meetings. A kindred zeal very generally pervaded the Society, judging from such of its early records as I have had access to, or seen copies of. Yet these records relate to a period in its history, respecting which we are emphatically reminded, in the Preface to the Book of Extracts, of "the godly zeal, purity, probity, simplicity, and self-denial, so conspicuous in *our worthy predecessors*," as if their conduct merited almost unqualified approbation.

In the same paragraph it is also said, "And notwithstanding it be too obvious to be denied, that there are amongst us many sorrowful instances of a grievous departure," from such a picture as the foregoing gives of our ancestors, it is asserted, that "it must be allowed that, as a religious body, *we are the same people* our forefathers were, *in faith, in doctrine, in worship, in ministry, and in discipline.*"

p. vii.

An accurate comparison of "the later advices" of the Yearly Meeting, of its Epistles, and above all, of the records of its meetings for discipline," with those of a more ancient date," would not establish such an exact conformity, as the editors of that work have here claimed; nor vindicate the title of any period, since it became a distinct Society, to such undistinguishing praise as they have bestowed upon "our worthy predecessors."

A true knowledge of their excellencies, which I have no wish to depreciate, and of the most prominent failings which they exhibited, when acting in a collective capacity, is much more likely to incite their successors to emulate the former, and to avoid the latter, than to represent them in any other than their true colours, generally speaking, as upright, but fallible men, and when united, as forming a fallible church.

That the notions of the early Quakers, with regard to propriety of behaviour during the time of public worship, were materially different from those now entertained by their successors, the following minute of the Yearly Meeting, held in 1675, will evince. It is unquestionably authentic, and was usually inserted in the *MS.* volumes of the minutes and advices of that Meeting, under the head SINGING. I never saw a copy in which this minute was not inserted.

"It hath been, and is our living sense and constant testimony, according to our experience of the diverse operations of the spirit and power of God in his church, that there hath been, and is, serious sighing, sensible groaning, and reverent singing, breathing forth an heavenly sound of joy, with grace, with the spirit, and with understanding, in blessed unity with the brethren, while they are in the public labour and service of the gospel, whether by preaching, praying, or praising God, in the same power

and spirit, and all to edification and comfort in the church of Christ : which, therefore, is not to be discouraged by any. But where any do, or shall abuse the power of God, or are immoderate, or do either in imitation, which rather burthens than edifies, such ought to be privately admonished, unless rebellious ; for that live, spirit and power is risen in the church, which doth distinguish, and hath power accordingly to judge."

That so great and so beneficial a change should have been gradually introduced, as the total discontinuance of so singular a mode of singing *by the congregation*, which was once directed not to be discouraged by any, affords just cause for congratulation. It denotes actual improvement. The "unbecoming tones, sounds and gestures" of many acknowledged ministers among Friends, against which they are, with great propriety, still annually advised, may be perhaps justly considered as the remains of the fanatical custom so minutely described in the above minute. For if the congregation sang, and breathed forth vocal sounds, in unison with the preacher, while he was engaged in the duties of his office, it cannot, I think, be reasonably doubted, but he sang also, or at least often expressed himself in a manner that would not be now thought, "agreeable to Christian gravity."

While the Yearly Meeting thought fit to encourage such a practice, those who disapproved it as improper in itself, were in those times probably subjected to dealing and disownment, for openly expressing their opinions. That a disposition to discourage the practice existed at that time, the minute affords sufficient evidence ; yet I confess it is difficult to imagine, that such men as Penn, Barclay and Penington could ever have given their countenance to such a mode of expressing unity with preachers of the gospel. And if not, such men must, I have often

thought, had much to bear from their well-meaning, but less enlightened brethren. For the minute affords undeniable proof of the prevalence of the fanatical practice it so accurately describes.

Many wise and good men of unquestionable integrity and piety, have entertained serious doubts, whether the evils introduced into Christian churches, by such systems of discipline as have hitherto been established, have not overbalanced their advantages. That there are dangers on this hand every reflecting mind will readily grant. Persons of good judgment have been so strongly impressed with the extent of those abuses, to which the exercise of a very moderate portion of church power, naturally leads, as to be ready to abandon the important benefits, which a wise and temperate exercise of Christian discipline is calculated to produce.

To gain these desirable objects with any reasonable degree of security, against those abuses to which I have adverted, it is necessary that the discipline established in any church, should be strictly confined to its proper objects, as a code of *Christian law*. That it should be administered, only in a Christian spirit, and in a regular orderly manner, under the express sanction of the known rules of such Society, according to gospel order, and more especially, in cases of exclusion from religious fellowship, which is the utmost power such a community can exercise. How far these principles have been kept in view, lost sight of, or violated during the proceedings recorded in the ensuing pages, let those judge who peruse them with attention.

Many of my readers may not know what the established requisites of membership have long been in the religious Society from which I have been expelled. To enable such better to form their own judgment, it may be proper to mention that by one of its rules, which is still in force, the Yearly Meet-

ing, in 1694, directed that “*all Friends*—removing from one Monthly Meeting, to another, are to have certificates, or other usual recommendation, from the Monthly Meeting to which they belong, *of their sober and orderly conversation*; and if single persons, to signify also their clearness respecting marriage engagements.” Book of Extracts, p. 160.—When a person removing is certified “after due enquiry,” to be clear in these respects, and to be in solvent circumstances, or free from debts, on the delivery of such certificate “to the Meeting into which he is removed,” the rules declare “he shall thenceforward be deemed a member of the Meeting he so removes into,” without questioning the party respecting points of faith, or articles of speculative belief. Such is the usual, and, so far as I know, the uniform practice. Ibid. p. 162. These certificates are deemed unexceptionable, and those which are expressed in less full terms, are nevertheless, sufficient to convey the rights of membership. In the year 1790, the Yearly Meeting issued the following minute.

“It is the judgment of this Meeting, that it will not be expedient or safe to omit in certificates, all notice of *the conduct* of Friends, who remove. Nevertheless, as it also seems improper to confine Monthly Meetings, in every case, to the use of the precise terms *sober and orderly*, this Meeting directs, that they shall be at liberty to use such other terms in describing the *conduct* and *conversation* of their members, as circumstances may require, and truth dictate: avoiding in all cases such exposure of past errors, as is inconsistent with *true gospel order*.” Ibid, 161.

In conformity to the existing rules, being about to remove from my native city, I requested a certificate of the Monthly Meeting, held therein, on the 22nd of February, 1791, which was granted, and is as follows:—

“To the Friends at their Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff, in London.

“ Dear Friends,

“ Thomas Foster, a member of our Meeting, having informed us of his intention of removing to London, and requested our certificate, these are, therefore to certify you, that after due enquiry made, it appears he was of sober life and conversation, and left us solvent, and free from marriage engagements. As such, we recommend him to your Christian regard and attention, sincerely desiring his growth, and preservation in the truth. We are, with affectionate regard, your friends.

“ Signed in and on behalf of our Monthly Meeting at Worcester, the 29th of 3rd mo. 1791, by Samuel Corbyn, Moses Goodere, George Becket, Timothy Bevington, Joseph Beesley, Henry Beesley, Richard Lowe, Robert Foster, Thomas Newman, William Knight, John Pumphrey, Henry Millard, Samuel Read, Seymer Whitehead, Richard Burlingham, Joseph Bangham, Oliver Lowe, John Beesley, Francis Beesley, Robert Newman, Stanley Pumphrey, Thomas Howe, Joseph Ford.”

Such was my introduction to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, the ostensible causes of the dissolution of this connexion, are detailed in the following pages.

It may be proper to say for the information of some of my readers, that in the Society of Friends, the members of one, or, in most cases, of several congregations, constitute a *Monthly Meeting for Discipline*. The members of all the Monthly Meetings in one, or several adjacent counties, form a Quarterly Meeting, to which representatives are appointed, from each of the Monthly Meetings within its district, yet no member is excluded, and they are generally expected to attend. Each Quarterly Meeting in Great Britain, is directed, annually, to depute four representatives to the Yearly Meeting held in London, but the county of York, in consideration of its extent, is allowed to send eight, and London

twelve. Any member of the Society may be present at its sittings, and partake in its deliberations. This Meeting possesses the supreme legislative and judicial power in all matters of discipline, for the whole Society throughout Great Britain, and *in matters of faith and principle*," for Ireland also, from whence representatives are annually deputed, by the national Yearly Meeting held in Dublin. Book of Extracts, p. 4.

Two or more "faithful Friends," are directed to be appointed by every Monthly Meeting, as overseers in each particular Meeting, and those Meetings are earnestly recommended to be "careful to choose such as are themselves *of upright and unblameable conversation*, that the advice they shall occasionally administer to other friends, may be the better received, and carry with it *the greater weight and force*, on the minds of those whom they shall be concerned to admonish." 1752. Ibid, p. 109.

In 1717, the Yearly Meeting recommended, that Friends, in their Meetings for Discipline, "labour to find a nearness to each other in spirit, this being the true way to a thorough reconciliation, wherever there is, or may have been, any difference of apprehension. Hereby friends will be preserved in that sweetness of spirit, that is, and will be the bond of true peace, throughout all the churches of Christ." Ibid, p. 45.

In unison with this excellent advice, the Yearly Meeting in 1735, recommended "as a means very conducive to the preservation of Friends, a people of one heart and one way—that the discipline of the church, in the several Meetings, instituted for that purpose, be kept up and managed in a spirit of love and wisdom. Let all things in those Meetings be done in charity; let the love of God, in an especial manner, rule in your hearts; and therein, though sometimes different sentiments may arise, yet will every member have the same thing in view, viz. the

glory of God, and the good of his church and people, and in this singleness of heart will best promote, the great end and services of those Meetings. We advise therefore, upon this occasion, that nothing be done through strife and contention, or from any private views, or by the influence of numbers; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem another better than himself." Ibid, 46, 47.

The Yearly Meeting, in 1727, desired Monthly Meetings "to appoint some serious, discreet and judicious friends, who are not ministers, tenderly to encourage, and help young ministers, and advise others as they, in the wisdom of God, see occasion; and where there are meetings of ministering Friends, the Friends so appointed are to be admitted, as members of such Meetings of Ministers, and to act therein, for the good purposes aforesaid." Ibid. p. 99.

In the written Epistle, for 1731, "the elders" thus appointed, are exhorted "to help and inform the weak, when suitable opportunities present; that both ministers and hearers, pursuing one and the same end, namely, the glory of God, and the welfare one of another, the church may be edified, increase and flourish." In the same Epistle ministers are advised to be "ready to hear and receive advice, as well as to teach and instruct," and Monthly Meetings, to "take great care in giving certificates to those who travel; to prevent the uneasiness which sometimes falls on the church, from a weak and unskilful ministry."

"And let the elders, when they see occasion," says this judicious Epistle, "advise ministers to be very prudent in their conduct, not as busy-bodies, nor meddling with family or personal affairs, in which they are not concerned, or required to be assisting; and to be very tender of one another's reputation, and of that of Friends among whom they travel, neither giving ear to, nor spreading reports, tending to raise

in the minds of others, a lessening or disesteem of any of the brotherhood; and, as soon as their service in the ministry is over, to return to their habitations, and there take a reasonable and prudent care of their own business, household, and family. Ibid, p. 91.

The Yearly Meeting, in 1752, earnestly advised, "all Friends who travel in the work of the ministry, as well as others, that they not only shut their ears against all private informations of persons and things, tending to the defamation of particular persons, or families, and to stir up disputes and contentions in Meetings for Discipline; but also rebuke and reprove the person or persons, who shall attempt to prejudice their minds, with any private informations of that nature; which are often false and attended with baneful consequences to the reputation of the persons or families, who are so unkindly and unjustly dealt by; and may tend to lead such ministers, or others, as shall give ear to the same, in a wrong line of judgment." Ibid. p. 93.

In 1728 the Yearly Meeting advised, "that ministers, in all their preaching, writing and conversing about the things of God, keep to the form of sound words, or scripture terms; and that none pretend to be wise above what is written, and in such pretended wisdom, go about to explain the things of God, in the words which man's wisdom teaches." Ibid iv. 89. Such are the advices the Yearly Meeting has given, to those who are active in the administration of the discipline. The reader may do well occasionally to recollect their import, in perusing the following pages.

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A

NARRATIVE,

&c.

AFTER having been for more than fifty years a member of the Society of Friends, in which I was born and educated, without ever receiving a disciplinary visit, on any charge of delinquency, I have lately been subjected for the first time in my life to what is sometimes called "*Dealing*," and sometimes "Christian discipline." Of the first conference I soon afterwards made the following minutes.

1811, Aug. 26th. This morning Henry Knight, one of the overseers of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, paid me a visit on account of my having given away some copies of a printed paper, containing Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, and become a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society.

I requested to know what part of the Remarks he disapproved? He replied, the general tenor of the paper was, in his apprehension, very different from the doctrines of Friends. And in particular, *it did not*

B

admit that Christ was God. As to the Unitarian Book Society, he did not even know that such a society existed till he was informed I was a member of it. But he concluded their principles were very different from those of Friends.

I wished to know in what sense he considered Christ as God? Whether he meant to assert any distinct personal divinity, besides that of the Father which dwelt in him, according to the text, which says, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself?" My visitor disavowed the doctrine that Christ *is the second person in the Trinity*. His belief appeared to be, that Christ was in reality God himself, and not any distinct being, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, as all Trinitarians maintain. This Sabellian notion, however, he did not ascribe to the person of Christ, but *to that divine power which resided in, and acted by him.*

He asserted that the 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16, represents Christ as "as the blessed and only Potentate, who only hath immortality." I urged its evident reference to the Father, and the utter inapplicability of it to Christ.

My visitor next urged the text in Isaiah, which in the common version describes a child and a son to be born at a future time, as the mighty God and the everlasting Father. This I told him was, I conceived, an erroneous translation. As to the real character of Christ, I observed he himself has on many occasions informed us who, and what, he was, in the clearest and most explicit terms, and that I fully believed all he was recorded in the New Testament to have said concerning himself.

The text in which Christ is represented as saying "I and my Father are one" was urged by my visitor. But by this, I contended, could not consistently with the context, be understood a personal union, but only the unity of will and action. For in the preced-

ing verse, Christ is recorded to have said, and who shall dare to contradict him, "*My Father is greater than all*"—to whom he prayed thus, "Holy Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one as we are.*"

My visitor also adduced John i. 1. and xvii. 5. In the latter text Christ is represented as praying to that great Being whom he describes in the third verse of the same chapter as "*the only true God,*" in these terms.—"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." With regard to these texts, I urged the necessity of carefully regarding the context of each in ascertaining their true import; viz. *what the Evangelist meant to express.* That I had no objection to these texts, although I might to my visitor's construction of them.

As my visitor repeatedly spoke of information which had been given him respecting my religious opinions, I requested he would acquaint me from whom he had received his intelligence, and what it was that his informants alleged respecting my supposed errors.

The number of persons from whom he had received such accounts, not less, he said, than nine or ten, he urged as an excuse for not giving me any farther account of their accusations, and he declined saying who any of them were. I told him, if he came, as he professed to do, out of Christian love and goodwill, to caution me against any errors he conceived I had fallen into, I was obliged for his kind intention, and should consider any advice he might give me, in the same disposition of mind.

But if he came at the instigation of others, whom he refused naming, with a view to *Dealing* and disownment for any errors in judgment into which I may have fallen, or for the open profession of what I believed to be Christian truth, I should expect any

charges against me should be given in writing, to which I would reply in a similar manner. That I held no religious doctrines that I was ashamed or afraid to avow, and none as essential but such as were to be found in the Scriptures, and that to the best of my knowledge I believed all the doctrines of Christ, that were recorded in the New Testament, and considered his authority *as far superior to any other in all that respected faith and worship.*

My worthy visitor recommended me to avoid for the future disseminating sentiments which were so generally disapproved by others, as well as by Friends, *but to keep them to myself*, as the circulation of them *had hurt many weak minds.* And this advice he pressed upon me as likely to promote peace of mind and future tranquillity and happiness.

Such advice, I replied, had been given a thousand times. It was the incessant language of the Romish Church at the period of the Reformation, and had been very generally adopted by the rulers of most churches in almost every age. That I was sensible of the great importance of religious truth, and that no one could be so deeply interested in my forming right opinions concerning it as myself. But as to any engagement to abstain from communicating my views of religious truth from time to time, as proper occasions may occur, I must decline holding out any such expectation. We parted in a very friendly manner, with mutual expressions of kindness to each other.

FIRST VISIT OF THE OVERSEERS.

1811. Sept. 6. This evening Henry Knight and Richard Bowman, as overseers of Ratcliff Meeting, paid me a visit; the object of which they stated to be, to obtain some farther explanation respecting the paper Henry Knight spoke to me about. I admitted

having given away some copies of it, and also of a reply to it by Breviloquus, which they had not seen. They read it (in the Monthly Repository, Vol. V, p. 647,) and then asked *if I approved it?*

I replied that I was quite as willing it should be seen and judged of by others as the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle; but as I had received one visit from Henry Knight and recorded the substance of our conference, I begged leave to read those minutes, which I did, and expunged an expression or two which he did not recollect having used. The remainder he admitted to be a correct statement of the substance of our conference.

On referring to 1 Tim. vi. 15. 16. I re-urged that it was *God*, and not *Jesus Christ*, whom the apostle describes as "*the blessed and only Potentate, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen or can see.*"—And asked, (to no purpose) how the latter part of this apostolic description could be applicable to Christ? As to the text he had quoted from Isaiah, ix. 6. as rendered in the authorized version, John Locke, I observed, states it to be an erroneous translation. "Surely," says he, "it is high time to correct that *known false reading*, and most glaring self-contradiction in our English bibles, in which Christ is spoken of expressly in the very same place, as a child to be born at some future time, and is nevertheless styled the everlasting Father, instead of *the Father of the age to come*. It is not sufficient that learned men know this perversion of the sacred text, it should be made plain and evident to all; as we find Christians continually misled by it *into dark and debasing notions of the eternal, unchangeable God.*"—See an Examination of the Passages in the New Testament respecting the Person of Jesus. By J. Smith, Gentleman, p. 133.

With regard to the import of John, xvii. 5. they disclaimed all idea of *a separate or distinct personal*

Why did the author here misread the text? This text - 'The King of kings & Lord of lords'

pre-existence of Christ with the Father, but said they considered Christ *as being himself the Father*, and they also disclaimed the notion of Christ being the second person in the Trinity, *as never having been held by Friends, and as wholly unscriptural*.

My visitors represented how improper they deemed it, for any member of the Society to promote in any degree the circulation of a paper which evidently censured *what had been approved by the Yearly Meeting*.

I called their attention to that part of the Epistle which spoke of the object of prayer in ambiguous, and, as I think, highly improper terms, if intended to designate the giver of every good and every perfect gift, as being one "*upon whom help was laid*," that is, one *who received help from another*.

We referred to the 89th Psalm, where this phrase is applied to David, as my visitors agreed, but Richard Bowman expressed his persuasion that it was elsewhere applied to Christ. He could not point out where, but in case he should make such a discovery, I requested him to refer me to the text, and endeavoured to impress my visitors with the danger of adopting any unscriptural designations of the object of worship, by pointing out some of the steps by which great corruptions had been gradually introduced into professed Christian churches.

As Richard Bowman said he considered all the objections to the Epistle in the Remarks to be unfounded, I asked whether an erroneous quotation of scripture was to be defended because it happened to be so quoted in a Yearly Meeting Epistle? On which he said, he did not know it contained any misquotation of a text of scripture! I pointed out one which does not accord with the following texts, Mat. vi. 33, and Luke xii. 31.

On the declaration of Christ, in Mat. xxviii. 18, "All power is *given* unto me, in heaven and in earth," which is quoted by Brevilocus as "a defi-

He was not to be censured, when he found fault with

dition of omnipotence," being urged by my visitors for the same purpose, I referred them to the 2 Thess. ii. 9. which describes the coming of "the man of sin" to be "after the working of Satan, *with all power*," to shew them that such expressions in scripture are sometimes used when the writer could not be supposed to speak of *absolute omnipotence*.

Richard Bowman read a part of the Preface to the "Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society," containing its fundamental principles, and the greater part of the next paragraph.

I informed my visitors, that I considered that the Society opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, on similar grounds to those which William Penn had so ably stated, in his "Sandy Foundation Shaken." That doctrine appeared to me one of the most injurious corruptions of pure and primitive Christianity, which had ever been introduced. That I had so esteemed it from my early years, and never as a doctrine held by the Society of Friends, that when I became a member of this Book Society, I entered into no subscription to articles of faith, but by paying a sum of money in the year 1804, became a member for life, entitling me to an annual allotment of books.

On my visitors taking leave, Richard Bowman said they should not feel satisfied without some farther explanation: I expressed my readiness to meet them again, but we parted without fixing any time for another conference.

SECOND VISIT OF THE OVERSEERS.

Oct. 23, 1811. This morning Henry Knight and Richard Bowman, as overseers of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, paid me another visit.

I read my minutes of our last conference, to the correctness of which they made only one objection.

Handwritten note at bottom of page:
 That expression applied to David
 as a false prophet.

It related to an admission, which they did not recollect making; and which I accordingly expunged; but as I consider the sentiment important, I shall restate it, not as theirs but my own: viz. That such an application of the phrase from the 89th Psalm, to the object of prayer, as the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810 contains, is improper and objectionable.

When I had made this correction, I reminded Richard Bowman of the strong persuasion he expressed at our last conference, that this phrase was applied to Christ in another part of the scriptures; and of my request to him, that he would point out the passage when he had found it. He appeared to have no longer any hope of doing this. But Henry Knight said it had been applied to Christ by William Penn. I brought him the first volume of Penn's Works, and he pointed it out.

In this passage he says, speaking of Christ, "For in him the fullness dwells: *Blessed be God for his sufficiency.* He," that is God, "laid help upon *him*, that he might be mighty to save all that come to God, through *him*. Do thou so, and he will change thee; ay, thy vile body, like unto *his glorious body*. He is the great philosopher indeed, the wisdom of God, that turns lead into gold, vile things into precious: for he maketh saints out of sinners, and almost *gods of men*."—Vol. I. Fol. p. 273.

I expressed my full approbation of the manner in which this phrase is applied to Christ, and assured my visitors, if it had been so applied in the Yearly Meeting Epistle, I should never have thought it objectionable. They professed themselves unable to perceive the difference. I only replied the difference appeared to me very great. It was not however Penn's application of the phrase, but its application in scripture, that was the question between us, and whether that would warrant such a use of it as the compilers of the Epistle had made.

In the scriptures it is I believe only applied to David. And although William Penn has applied it very pertinently to Christ, in the foregoing passage, he does not thereby confound scriptural distinctions, but refers all the "sufficiency" of Christ, *and that in the present tense*, to the source from whence, according to the uniform testimony of the scriptures, it could only be derived, *that is from God*.

My visitors wished to know whether I was inclined to withdraw myself from the Unitarian Book Society. I replied that they had not pointed out any sufficient reason why I should. They professed to be unacquainted with the general tenor of the books it has published. I therefore recommended them to peruse some of those works before they censured me for my connexion with that Society.

This they declined as unnecessary, although I offered to lend them any of the books, alledging that the Preface to the Book of Rules of itself contained enough to manifest the impropriety of any member of our Society being a subscriber to this, on account of the great difference between the doctrines therein, and *the known principles of Friends*.

On reading the passage they pointed out as containing ample proof of the difference they insisted on, sentence by sentence, that I might clearly understand the nature and extent of their objections, I found reason to conclude they did not apply to so much of its contents as the terms they had used led me at first to imagine.

To the fundamental principles of this Society my visitors made no objection whatever. They are so clear, so important, so sound and scriptural, that I can hardly imagine any denomination of Christians could object to the circulation of books which inculcate these great truths of our common Christianity, in an able and judicious manner, although they might say nothing respecting the peculiarities which

different Christian churches have annexed to these fundamental principles, however important their respective advocates may deem them, or whatever stress they may lay on them as the indispensable terms of religious communion.

Nor did they make any objection to the inference in the next paragraph respecting "the beneficial influence of these truths upon the moral conduct of men."

But, alas! the next inference which is deduced from the above-mentioned fundamentals, relates not so directly to moral conduct, as to opinions on points of faith. It is nevertheless very judiciously expressed, and refers only to such "foreign opinions" as men have attached to those primitive doctrines.

There is doubtless considerable difficulty in ascertaining, in some cases, what are and what are not "foreign opinions," and how far other tenets are strictly consistent with those fundamental articles of all true religion. But these differences of opinion neither diminish the importance of those truths, nor the obligation to inculcate them. To have these firmly impressed upon the mind has a natural tendency to prepare it for receiving farther degrees of Christian truth, and to guard it against the baleful influence of fanaticism and superstition. To promote these ends is therefore in effect to encourage the reception of other tenets in proportion as they really deserve the character of Christian doctrines.

My visitors were so far from censuring "a firm attachment to the doctrine of the Unity of God," that one of them represented the Society of Friends as holding that doctrine *in a more strict sense than the Unitarians did*; the latter making *a distinction between God and Christ*, whereas the former, (by his account of the matter) considered them *as one and the same Being*.

My visitors allowed Christ to be "the most distin-

guished of the prophets." That he was the messenger of God they granted; but they deemed it disrespectful to speak of him as *the creature of God*. I observed it was evident, by the connexion of the passage, it was "the man, Christ Jesus" that was so spoken of, and not that divine power which resided in and acted by him, to which he himself ascribed all his wonderful works. "*The Father within me doeth the works,*" that is, his power. "*I can of mine own self,*" or without his assistance, "*do nothing.*"

I asked them whether Christ was not called in Col. i. 15. "the first born of every creature," or of the whole creation? On referring to the text it appeared I had quoted it correctly. Nor did they deny or question the justice of my inference from it, that it applied the same term to Christ which they objected to *as disrespectful to his character*.

But they unitedly urged their incompetency to enter into a discussion of such abstruse subjects, expressing their hope, nevertheless, that I should not deem it unfriendly in them, if they *just mentioned the matter* to the Monthly Meeting to-morrow, for the sake of getting it off their shoulders: *so many Friends* had intimated that it was their duty as overseers to notice the case, *that they could not well do otherwise*, painful as they professed it to be to themselves. I inquired whether the Friends they spoke of, were members of our Monthly Meeting or of some other. They replied, without hesitation, "*they are not members of our Meeting.*"

With regard to their intention of reporting the case to the Monthly Meeting to-morrow, I told them I thought they should have acquainted me sooner, but wished them to act as their own sense of duty dictated. It was very immaterial to me whether the case were laid before the Monthly Meeting to-morrow or a few months hence; but I reminded

them the rules of the Society required great care not to bring cases before a meeting for discipline, unnecessarily or prematurely; especially such as did not relate to immoral conduct. They assented to this, and intimated their intention to defer any mention of the case to the Monthly Meeting to-morrow, but did not propose paying me another visit unless I should request it.

CONFERENCE WITH THE OVERSEERS.

Oct. 27th, 1811. At the close of the meeting for worship this morning, I requested an interview with Henry Knight and Richard Bowman, in order to read to them my minutes of the conference with them on the 23rd inst. which I did accordingly at the house of Henry Knight.

They made no objection to them as incorrect. But on reading the paragraphs in p. 9 and 10, they inquired what need I had to make those observations on the fundamental principles of the London Unitarian Book Society, and the two first sentences of the next paragraph, *as they did not make any objection to those parts.*

I replied, as they had objected in very general terms to the whole, I had sufficient reason for adverting to those passages. I had not taken up those sentiments lately, but in early life, and the first strong impression on my mind respecting their great importance as Christian doctrines, was derived from Penn's "Sandy Foundation Shaken," where they are so clearly and forcibly stated. This impression has never been effaced, but has been confirmed by subsequent inquiry and reflection. It has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength.

Henry Knight referred me to "Penn's Innocency with her open Face," which the author called an Apology for the former work, and therefore he

thought it should be considered as explanatory of his sentiments when he wrote it.

I replied, I long ago read it with attention, and carefully compared its contents with those of the "Sandy Foundation Shaken." But I could never find reason for thinking, as I knew had been said of late years, that it was intended as an Apology, very nearly allied to a recantation.

It was not so considered by Penn's contemporaries; nor could such an inference be justly drawn from the latter work being called an apology for the former. Did not Robert Barclay, who lived in the same age, call his great work an Apology for the true Christian Divinity? a title, probably adopted from the celebrated defence of the doctrines of the early Christians, presented to Antoninus Pius, the Roman emperor, under the title of an Apology, by the famous Justin Martyr.

But on whatever ground Barclay adopted such a title, I could not consider it as well chosen. Nor could its adoption by Penn do any thing towards subverting his arguments in the "Sandy Foundation Shaken," which he thought, and I think, are firmly fixed *on the immoveable foundations of scripture and right reason.*

I well remember this work being very impressively recommended by a minister of eminence to the general attention of Friends, at a Yearly Meeting, many years ago. I was then young, but being well acquainted with that work, and thinking highly of its merits, this recommendation of it, by a minister deservedly and generally esteemed, gave me peculiar satisfaction. Nor did a single person think fit to qualify the advice given, by any reference to "Innocency with her open Face," or to throw out any hint that Friends might be in danger of adopting erroneous sentiments by perusing the "Sandy Foundation Shaken" without a comment.

Richard Bowman observed he never before heard it had been so recommended in the Yearly Meeting. I assured him it was, while I was present, and by a man whom I considered as one of the best ministers I had ever known in the Society. That the Society had republished it in Penn's "*Select Works*," and could not therefore consistently censure any person for adhering to the doctrines it contained.

Soon after the above conference I addressed the following letter to the overseers.

TO HENRY KNIGHT and RICHARD BOWMAN.

Bromley, Nov. 5, 1811.

Respected Friends,

You have paid me two visits as overseers of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, on account of my having submitted to the consideration of certain persons some printed Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, which first appeared in the Monthly Repository for that year, p. 490; and also on account of my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society. These are the only two points which you have alleged against me.

During these visits we have had some free and friendly conversation respecting each, of the substance of which, as you know, I soon after made minutes, as also of a previous conference with Henry Knight on the same subjects. These having been admitted by you to contain a pretty correct account of those conferences, I shall refer to, as future occasions may require.

At the second conference you intimated your intention of just mentioning the matter to our Monthly Meeting, without paying me another visit. That is, I suppose, to denounce me as a delinquent. On this intimation I informed you, that if such was your

determination, it was of no consequence to me personally, whether it was done, as you proposed, at the Monthly Meeting, to be held the next day, or a few months hence.

Since you have however, by concluding at least to defer your accusation another month, given me farther time for reflection on the situation in which we respectively stand in relation to your said intentions, I cannot but feel a wish that you may also avail yourselves of it. And I hope you will not deem it unbecoming in me to submit in writing a few additional thoughts respecting it to your deliberate consideration.

In the first place I must observe, that I am yet wholly ignorant what rule of the Society, of which we are members, I am supposed to have broken. It is for you to reflect on the propriety of accusing any individual under such circumstances, and to act as your judgment dictates.

But you must excuse my saying, it appears to me, before you take such a step, it behoves you, in regard to your own reputation and that of the Meeting, on whose behalf you act, previously to ascertain that some rule has been transgressed, that the party has been dealt with according to gospel order, and lastly, that the case is ripe for, and requires public exposure, as an offence against the rules of the Society. To which I must add, that the plainest principles of common justice require, that the party accused should be early and explicitly informed what law or rule of the Society he is charged with having broken.

You ought not only to be well satisfied in your own minds, after an attentive examination, that the rule upon which you mean to proceed, properly applies to the case, but of the necessity, upon clear Christian principles, for reporting it to a meeting for discipline. Should you continue to act in this affair,

more upon the opinions of others, than on your own unbiassed judgment, it may be worth your while to consider how far those members of other meetings, whom you have repeatedly spoken of, but always declined naming, have themselves duly observed gospel order in the case? And how they can be properly qualified to sit in judgment upon it in the event of an appeal?

That these persons may become entitled to exercise such a power, according to the letter of our rules, you must admit. And from the kind of zeal they have already manifested, it is natural, and no breach of charity to conclude its activity would not decline while any thing remained unaccomplished, which they had incited others to undertake, and which their own efforts might contribute to secure. Blind zeal can, we know by experience, make accusers the judges of an appeal against their own accusation. Nor is there, that I know of, any constitutional remedy for so glaring an evil, where a man's accusers, and the full extent of their insinuations and charges against him are concealed from himself, and may nevertheless be well known to his judges.

As to the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, I would observe, that they are either just or they are not. If they are just, you cannot reasonably object to them, or censure me for whatever publicity I have given them. If they are not just, to give them circulation is but to expose their weakness and promote their refutation.

The writer of these Remarks seems to have formed a favourable opinion of such former epistles of the same annual assembly as he had seen, and expresses his surprise at finding such passages as he deemed erroneous in this; never having before observed in them "a profession of similar doctrines." Now, the passages on which he has animadverted are either accordant with the general tenor of former

Yearly Epistles, or they are not. If they are, it must be very easy to shew their agreement, but this has not, I believe, been yet attempted, and would prove an arduous undertaking. If they are not accordant with each other, and the general tenor of these epistles be sound and scriptural with regard to the doctrines in question, as this writer represents, you cannot surely censure me for giving publicity to a paper, the writer of which expresses his approbation of the general language of these epistles on those important points which he has noticed, merely because he has also remarked a few passages which appear to him inconsistent therewith, as well as with Scripture doctrine.

Our great Master was so far from representing such conduct criminal, that he exhorted even the cavilling Jews to "search the Scriptures," which implies examining, comparing, judging. And on another occasion, he appeals to the people, whom the text, Luke, xii. 56. describes as "hypocrites" in these terms.—"*Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*" His doctrines will all of them bear the severest investigation, and shine with the greater lustre and the more effect for being subjected to it, as will those of his professed followers, in proportion as they approach to the standard of primitive purity.

Are you well advised, my friends, in giving countenance by these proceedings to the idea, that our Yearly Epistles will not endure this trial? Reflect, whether the natural effect of subjecting them to it, is not to render those annual addresses to the church more sound, more correct, more scriptural and edifying?

May we, according to apostolic injunction, every one for himself, read, examine and compare one passage of Scripture with another, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual things," *by the aid of "that understanding given us of God."* And may we not, with-

out the imputation of something criminal, subject the epistles of our fallible brethren to the same test? May we neither compare them with each other, nor with the Scriptures? If we may, I would query of you, what more than this has the writer of the Remarks done? Or, will you say these epistles are to be held up as too sacred to be examined, or even to have inadvertent errors, and the probable effects of them, pointed out? Consider these things maturely, and then act towards me as you believe to be just and right.

You have intimated that I entertain some erroneous opinions. I grant it is more than probable I do, and thankful should I be to have any of them corrected, as I am happy never to have been, since I arrived at maturity, so deeply involved in error as to imagine myself free from it. But you have not imputed to me, in either of the conferences we have had, any wilful or corrupt errors. If, therefore, the opinions you impute to me as erroneous, are not the consequence of blameable negligence and inattention to the subject, I intreat you to consider who is entitled to cast the first stone at me, as not being himself also subject to error, and in this state of comparative imperfection, to see many things as through a glass darkly?

You should recollect that the New Testament enjoins it as an incumbent duty on all Christians, liberally to grant to each other, and even to encourage universally, the free exercise of the rights of private judgment. Our great Master uniformly inculcated this duty, as being of indispensable obligation. His disciples acquired this enlightened disposition of mind only by degrees, and were frequently subjected to his instructive reproofs for disregarding his precepts concerning it. "*Ye know not what spirit ye are of,*" said he unto them, on their manifesting an intolerant and persecuting spirit. At another time,

on their complaining to him of one who followed not with them, just in their track, he replied with equal dignity and wisdom,—“ *Forbid him not : for he that is not against us is for us.*” How worthy are these sayings, and the conduct they recommend, of our highest regard and zealous imitation.

With respect to the other branch of your intended accusation, I have also a few thoughts to submit to your consideration. Whatever may be the present state of religious knowledge within the pale of our small Society, you will, I presume, readily grant that there are multitudes of our neighbours who have great need to be taught “the first principles of the oracles of God,” as the text expresses it; or, in other words, of the Christian religion, as revealed in the Scriptures.

Many of these you will also admit, are not at all in the way of being benefitted by any of the means of communicating religious instruction which are adopted by our Society. Neither the labours of our ministers, nor the general tenor of those writings which are designed to inform others of the peculiar doctrines of our Society, are well adapted to convey such a general view of the fundamental truths of Christianity, as the persons I allude to stand in need of being taught, however fit those labours may be, to promote the edification of those to whom they are addressed, or those writings, to inform those who read them, concerning the tenets to which they relate.

Can it then be justly deemed censurable for me to unite with other well-disposed persons, although not members of our Society, in a benevolent attempt to “promote Christian knowledge and the practice of virtue” amongst those who neither attend our meetings for worship, nor read the writings of Friends, by distributing such books as appear to us, (every one judging and acting for himself) the

best calculated to forward these highly desirable objects ?

You do not profess to know, and consequently are not qualified to judge, of the general complexion of the works we distribute, or of the general character of those who peruse them. Nor will you, I suppose, pretend to have ascertained that the general effect they have produced has been prejudicial. You ought, at least as it seems to me, to be fully prepared to substantiate the hurtful tendency of such publications of this Book Society as I have individually promoted the circulation of, before you can be warranted in accusing me in the manner you have proposed, on any just or Christian principles, for being a subscriber to such a Society.

Before I conclude, I would recommend to your deliberate perusal two small pamphlets which accompany this letter, and of which I request your acceptance. The one appears to contain a correct and regular series of Extracts from the Yearly Meeting Epistles from 1678 to 1810, which will readily enable you to compare those passages in the Epistle for last year, on which we have had some friendly discussion, with the general tenor of those Epistles for former years on the same subjects. This comparison may assist you in determining whether they are consistent with each other, and if they are not, which is most conformable to Scripture doctrine.

The other is a well written letter on "the Innocency of Involuntary Error," (by Arthur Ashley Sykes,) and one of the works in the present year's Catalogue of Books belonging to the London Unitarian Book Society, and sold by them "at the price annexed to each article," or placed at the disposal of its subscribers to a certain amount annually on their own nomination. The perusal of this tract will, I trust, tend to convince you, that mutual forbear-

ance, candour and charity towards each other, where we have different apprehensions of religious truth, are more becoming the followers of Christ, than to aim through any other medium than conviction, at such an uniformity of faith as never was enjoined in the primitive Christian church, and can never be attained by any other means, even in appearance only, without inducing far greater evils than the most liberal toleration of the rights of private judgment ever produced.

If it should be your wish to pay me another visit, after the perusal of this letter and the two pamphlets sent with it, before you finally conclude what course to pursue, in discharge of your duty as overseers, I shall readily receive you, I hope, with a mind open to conviction, and disposed to embrace the truth in the love of it. In the mean time, I remain your sincere and well-wishing friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

CONFERENCE WITH THE OVERSEERS.

Nov. 17, 1811. Henry Knight and Richard Bowman informed me they had deliberately considered my letter, and not thinking it would answer any good purpose for them to pay me another visit, they intended to lay the case before the Monthly Meeting the 21st inst.

I informed them I intended to leave home the day before; but if they deemed further delay improper, I would endeavour to defer my journey, as I chose to be present when I was accused before a meeting for discipline.

The overseers observed that *no farther proceedings would take place till my return*. And having in my letter to them said something about an appeal, delay had better be avoided, as, if there was one appeal in

this case, *there would most probably be two*, and that might protract the matter *longer than was desirable*.

The same evening I wrote them the following letter:

Bromley, Nov. 17, 1812.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

A sincere wish to act towards you with uniform sincerity and candour, alone prompts me again to address you: the reception my former letter apparently met with, affords me no encouragement to continue the correspondence; but the intimation given me at our very brief conference this morning, that you meant to proceed *in part* upon the 20th rule, under the head, "Meetings for Discipline," (Book of Extracts, 2d Edit. p. 50) in your intended accusation against me, obliges me to inform you, that the purport of that rule has never been mentioned or referred to in either of the conferences I have had with you.

Nor have I, to the best of my knowledge, ever expressed any thing "against the validity of Christ's sufferings, blood, resurrection, ascension, or glory in the heavens, *according as they are set forth in the Scriptures*; or any ways tending to the denial of *the heavenly man Christ*." And yet these are the only points of faith which the rule enumerates, as affording ground for *dealing*, on the wilful rejection of some or all of these Christian tenets; and that only, after such persons had been "diligently instructed and admonished by faithful Friends, and not to be exposed by any to public reproof."

Can you say that any instruction and admonition has been extended towards me in relation to this rule? This you will not affirm; for the rule has been only simply referred to, and that not till this morn-

ing, and then without any mention of a single article contained in it.

You may perhaps imagine some inconsistency between this rule and those sentiments which you impute to me as erroneous, which I do not perceive; but we should have compared our respective ideas with each other, in reference to this rule, before you can be justified in representing it as forming any part of the ground of your intended proceedings against me. This you have neither done, nor attempted.

But as you have called my attention to this rule, I must observe, that to act upon it against me, would be to abandon the whole tenor and spirit of your proceedings hitherto. It authorizes no further *dealing* than instruction and private admonition, except towards those who "shall wilfully persist in error, in point of faith, after being duly informed." You have never yet to my knowledge, imputed to me wilful error, much less have I, on any such account, been duly admonished.

You know I made minutes of our several conferences, and read the same to you, and apprised you in my letter that I should refer to them as future occasions might require. Your mention of this rule, as if I had transgressed it, naturally recalled to my recollection, the solemn assurances I gave you during the first visit you paid me, and which I shall now transcribe, verbatim, as I then read them to you, viz. That as to "the real character of Christ, I fully believed all he was recorded in the New Testament to have said concerning himself—that I held no religious doctrines that I was ashamed or afraid to avow, and none as essential, but such as were to be found in the Scriptures, and that to the best of my knowledge, I believed all the doctrines of Christ that were recorded in the New Testament, and considered his authority as far superior to any other, in all that respected faith and worship."

So say all the Unitarians, as well

Is this, I would soberly ask you, "any ways tending to the denial of the heavenly man Christ?" Or, is it possible you can have forgotten the substance of the above declaration? Or, can it be, that admitting I made it, you are prepared to say, you disbelieve it? The only other alternative.

If such misconceptions as these, or either of them, have already occurred between us, it evinces the propriety of your reducing your accusations to writing; and on recurring to my minutes, I perceive that I urged your so doing at our first conference, "for the sake of preventing, as much as possible, mutual misapprehension," and engaged to give you my reply to them in a similar manner. In such a mode of procedure there might be a reasonable prospect of our understanding each other, which I am seriously persuaded we do not at present, with sufficient accuracy, to warrant on any just principles, such further proceedings as you have proposed. I have been given to understand that you meant to proceed *in part* upon the rule of which I have spoken above, but I am not yet informed what other rule I am supposed to have broken.

The delay you have consented to in consequence of my leaving home, I ought to acknowledge as an act of considerate kindness. But I do not feel easy to defer submitting these things to your consideration till after my return. I am very far from being desirous of entering into such a contest as you, somewhat incautiously, in my apprehension, hinted at to-day, in terms that implied more than you possibly meant me to understand.

On recurring to my former letter you will find, that I said nothing respecting my having an intention of appealing. That is a question I have not taken into consideration, nor shall I prematurely. If there should be occasion there will be ample time for me to consider that point deliberately, and to act accord-

ingly. It was not with any reference to my own conduct, but to yours, and that of my still unknown accusers, that I at all adverted to the possible case of an appeal; and then (not as I understood you) in such terms as implied your calculating upon the unfavourable issue of a first appeal, and the consequent probability of a second. These significant anticipations I shall leave to others.

I remain your sincere well-wishing friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

To Henry Knight and Richard Bowman.

REPLY TO THE REMARKS, &c.

In the next stage of these proceedings, the overseers exhibiting themselves as my accusers, for having "imbibed and aided in promoting some opinions" which they deemed unsound, it may be proper to inform the reader, that they were not content with defending their notions of orthodoxy in their visits to me, without also promoting *amongst Friends* the circulation in *M.S.* of the following Reply to the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810.

Some copies of these Remarks being printed, one was lent by a *Friend* of Worcester to Stanley Pumphrey, of the same place, an appointed elder in the Society. He returned it, expressing his obligations "for the sight of the paper," with the following observations on its contents.

"I have perused it attentively," (says he) "and am of the opinion that it requires no great depth of what I expect the writer of the paper would call *theological understanding* to shew the weakness of his objections and the superficial nature of the doctrines he wishes to inculcate; indeed, had he adopted himself what he recommends to others, '*the assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures*,' he would, I think, have seen that all his laboured endeavours to make a

distinction between God and Christ must prove futile; he would have found that although in his manifestation upon earth, and in the obedience he recommends by his own example in the character of Son, *the Father* is spoken of *as a second Person*, yet he [Christ] expressly says, 'I and my Father are one,' and, 'the Father is in me, and I in him.' The declaration of the disciple John on this subject is likewise positive and convincing as to the divinity of Christ and his oneness with the Father; he introduces the account of our Saviour's ministry with these memorable words:—'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; in him was life, and the life was the light of men.' And a little after, as though to remove all uncertainty, he says,—'And the word' (which he had been describing as 'being with God,' and 'God,') '*was made flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' All this was but in unison with what was foretold of him by the prophet.—'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and *his name shall be called* wonderful Counsellor, *the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father*, the Prince of Peace.'

"These and other texts to the like import place our Saviour *in the exalted and omnipotent character of God and Christ*; and having established *this* and given it as the received doctrine of the Society, all the objections worthy of notice fall to the ground.

"Had the writer *really been what he informs us he was*, viz. an observer 'of the drift of the Epistles issued from the same Annual Assembly;' or *had he noticed* the Vindication of their Principles, into which

the Society was drawn, by the propagation of tenets similar to his own in the case of H—— B——, [Hannah Barnard], he need not have applied for information, as to what the opinion of the present or early Friends was on this subject; he would have *known* that they believed, and now believe that Christ is the *Word* spoken of by the evangelist John, ‘which was in the beginning with *God*, and which was *God*; that all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made.’

“And it will be well if the Unitarian Christian, before he again raises *such objections*, would seriously reflect on the advice of the apostle to the Colossians, and consider how far he is implicated therein— ‘Beware lest any man spoil you through *philosophy* and *vain deceit*, after *the tradition of Men*, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; for in *him* dwelleth all the *fulness* of the *Godhead* bodily.’

“Worcester, 1st Month, 3d, 1811.”

The above Reply to the Remarks is the only one I have seen, except the one by Breviloquus, noticed in p. 5. It was sent me by a friend of mine who resides at Worcester, and was a member of the Society called Quakers, but had joined *the Established Church*. I had given him in London, two or three copies of the Remarks. When I acknowledged the receipt of the Reply, I put into his hands a Rejoinder, from which I shall extract two passages only. The first relates to a most extraordinary assertion, as it appeared to me, concerning which I said:

“I have seldom been more surprised at any statement respecting *the Supreme Being*, which an evident leaning towards the side of supposed orthodoxy *has produced*, than at a declaration in the paper purporting to be written by S. P. that in the holy scriptures, ‘*the Father is spoken of as a second person.*’ Avowed Trinitarians, to use their own phrase, assert that God the Father is ‘*primus inter pares*,’ or, the

first among equals. S. P. however, while imputing to 'an Unitarian Christian' a comparative ignorance of the scriptures and inattention to the study of them, fancies his superior discernment has discovered that God is therein 'spoken of *as a second person!*' He has not referred to any text in support of his assertion, and I believe the more assiduously he studies the sacred writings, the more difficult he will find it to point out any that can favour such a notion, when coolly and impartially considered. It needed not as he imagines, any '*laboured endeavours* to make a distinction between *God* and *Christ.*' The evangelists have made it, as broadly and pointedly as the greatest masters of language can possibly, between any two persons or beings whatever."

The other passage relates to an impeachment of 'the veracity of the Unitarian Christian, as not having '*really been*' what S. P. asserts, '*he informs us he was,*' viz. an observer 'of the drift of the Epistles from the same annual Assembly.' This serious charge is wholly unfounded, the import of the words marked as quotation is materially different from that of the words used, inasmuch as the observation was restricted to 'the *general* drift of such Epistles *as he had seen,*' without professing to have seen all the Epistles that have been issued by 'the same annual Assembly.' At the same time I am of opinion, that the most minute examination of all that have been published, previous to the one for 1810, would not discover a profession of similar doctrines. S. P. should be cautious how he again without cause imputes wilful falsehood to another, however weak he may deem the objections he would prove to be futile, or superficial the doctrines he would confute."

Being at Worcester in November 1811, I called on Stanley Pumphrey, and requested he would inform me whether he had given any, and what information to any of *the London Friends* respecting

me, in relation to "the Remarks," as I expected to be accused by the overseers of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, of having promoted their circulation. He informed me some inquiries had been made of him, when he was at the last Yearly Meeting, (but by whom he refused saying) if he knew whether I had dispersed any of those Remarks *among Friends at Worcester?* That he replied, *I do not know that he has*, but I saw a copy, and wrote a Reply to it, which was sent to *Thomas Foster*, and I therefore conclude he had some concern in their dispersion.

I left with him a copy of my Rejoinder, and a day or two after saw him again, when he informed me, that by saying *the Father* was spoken of in the scriptures "*as a second person*," he only meant that he was spoken of *as another person*. That he only used those terms as the second person singular, just as he should to distinguish *his own father* from *himself*, or *one person* from *another*; that he did not intend to imply any inferiority in *the Father*, by using *those expressions*, and he appeared hurt at the manner of my noticing them.

I replied, that although I should deem the application of such terms to God highly irreverent, I did not impute any such intention to him. Nor had I said any thing of their import, but simply quoted the expression, leaving the reader to judge of it for himself. I could not consider it as proper or scriptural, but far otherwise. That I was pleased to hear his acknowledgment, which conceded what I contended for, that in the scriptures, Christ is uniformly spoken of, as *one person* or *being*, and *God the Father as another*, unless they contained absolute contradictions.

S. P. also disclaimed any intention of imputing *wilful falsehood* to the Unitarian Christian, and said he thought his words would not fairly admit such a construction.

Doubtless this will be an explanation of S. P.'s expression - but it was, as I understood, considering the accusation of his opponents.

The reader will judge of this, as also of the general character of a paper from which the overseers seem to have deduced most of the objections they made to the Remarks at the first visit they paid me, as I then thought from their similarity; and six days after one of them shewed me *a copy* (the date, the writers name and residence excepted) *evidently prepared for circulation.*

To shew what extravagant notions may be adopted by those who disregard scriptural distinctions, I will transcribe the concluding stanza of a "Hymn," which not only holds up the meek and humble Jesus as an object of worship, but describes it as an act of condescension in him to occupy and *fill* the throne of *the Almighty Father of the universe.* It is given in the Evangelical Magazine, for Oct. 1810, p. 399, verbatim, as follows:

" *Amen* they cry to him ALONE,
Who deigns to fill his Father's throne;
They give him glory, and again
Repeat his praise and say *Amen.*"

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING,

12th Month, 19th, 1812.

After some other business had been gone through, Richard Bowman addressed the Meeting as follows:

"It seems now to be a proper time for me to discharge what I may say is a painful duty, by informing the Meeting that Thomas Foster, one of our members, has imbibed and aided in the propagation of doctrines contrary to those of the Society."

Henry Knight signified his concurrence in that report, and soon after informed the Meeting that I was a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, producing one of the books of Rules, &c. with a list of the members, in which, he observed, the

name of Thomas Foster appeared as a member for life.

From the Preface to the book of Rules he read the following passage. "While, therefore, many well-meaning persons are propagating with zeal, opinions which the members of this Society judge to be unscriptural and idolatrous, they think it their duty to oppose the further progress of such pernicious errors, and publicly to avow their firm attachment to the doctrine of the *unity of God*, of his *unrivalled* and undivided authority and dominion; and their belief that Jesus Christ, the *most distinguished* of the prophets, is the *creature* and *messenger* of God, and *not his equal*, nor his *vicegerent* in the formation and government of the world, nor *co-partner* with him in divine honours, *as some have strangely supposed*." And having read it, he laid the book of Rules on the table.

Charles Palmer expressed his regret that the overseers had not simply intimated a wish for the Meeting to appoint a few Friends to assist them in a difficult case, without mentioning the name of the party. Another Friend or two expressed themselves to the like import. But the Meeting generally appeared to think the overseers had done right, and the clerk made a minute to the following effect.

"This Meeting being informed that Thomas Foster, a member of this Meeting, hath imbibed and aided in propagating *doctrines* contrary to the *general belief* of the Society, and hath become a member of a Society which avows 'their firm attachment,' &c. to the end of the sentence.

On the minute being read, Richard Bowman objected to the latter part of it, and proposed that part should be omitted.

John Harris (the clerk) said, he thought the minute ought to be definite; as did Charles Palmer;

but most of the Friends who spoke to this point, coincided in opinion with Richard Bowman.

Henry Knight also laid on the table a copy of the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, by an Unitarian Christian, informing the Meeting, that his first visit to me was on account of his being informed that I had been concerned in the dispersion of those Remarks, which *found fault with the Yearly Meeting Epistle*, and he thought contained sentiments *very different from those of Friends*.

When it appeared to me that the Meeting was about to appoint a committee to visit me, I observed, that although I wished to be present if I was to be accused, I had no desire to enter prematurely on my defence, or to preclude any Friend that was present from as free an expression of his sentiments as if I had been absent. But there were a few questions which I hoped it would not be deemed improper in me to put to the Friends who had visited me. And in the first place I requested them to inform me, whether they had received a letter which I had addressed to them, dated the 17th of last month, as neither of them had noticed the receipt of the letter.

The overseers replied they had received it, and did not deem any communication with me necessary concerning its contents!

I then requested to know whether they still adhered to the intention they had expressed to me on the 17th of last month, of grounding their proceedings *in part* upon the 20th rule under the head Meetings for Discipline?

They declined saying whether they did or not.

Samuel Marsh said, he thought it was improper to put such questions to the overseers, that having laid the case before the Meeting, it was for them to judge upon what rule to proceed. Several other

Friends expressed themselves to a similar purport. And although I again urged the propriety of informing an accused person what law he is supposed to have transgressed, I could obtain no answer.

Charles Palmer. "I do think, Friends, it is exceedingly to be regretted that the overseers did not pay Thomas Foster another visit subsequent to the receipt of his letter, and I must say, that it appears to me, justice requires that an accused person should in all cases be informed, what law or rule he is charged with having broken."

Richard Bowman. "Perhaps that Friend does not know, that this is not the only letter we have received from Thomas Foster?"

Charles Palmer. "Till I came here I did not know he had written you any; I was quite a stranger to the case; but from what has been said, I think some notice should have been taken of his letter."

I observed, as Richard Bowman has adverted to my former letter to the overseers, which was dated Nov. 5th last, it may not be improper to inform the Meeting, that the only passage in it which the overseers thought fit to notice to me, they mistook the purport of most strangely. Another part of it seems for a time to have satisfied them of the propriety of informing me what rule they supposed I had violated, yet now they refuse to say, whether they mean to adhere to that part of their accusation.

Samuel Marsh said he thought it was improper, in the present stage of the business, to enter into particulars; those should be attended to by a committee: the business of the Meeting was to notice the report of their overseers, in whom they might safely place full confidence, and not to attend to what Thomas Foster might think proper to say in his own defence, *or we might sit till night to very little purpose.*

I replied it was my wish to confine myself strictly

within the bounds of order, and of our rules. But before any appointment was made, there were a few other questions which I must beg leave to propose. The first related to the persons with whom the overseers who have visited me have held communications, and received information respecting my conduct and religious sentiments. These persons they informed me are not members of our Meeting, on which I have equal reason to congratulate you and myself.

William Binns, a member of Westminster, Monthly Meeting, exonerated himself from the imputation of being one of these talebearers, by saying he knew nothing of the case till it was opened in the Meeting. Samuel Marsh said, that he did not at all know it was likely to be brought forward *till last week*.

I again requested the overseers to inform me the names of my accusers, whom they at one time described as "*at least nine or ten Friends,*" and afterwards as "*many Friends.*"

Richard Bowman said, there was no need for them to comply with this request, *as I had acknowledged what they laid to my charge.*

I replied, *I had not admitted what was charged upon me by them, and inserted in the minute which had been read.* And that it was evident, from what had passed between us in our two conferences, that they had heard much more alleged against me by their informants than they had specifically charged me with, and I therefore once more called upon them before the Meeting, to make known to me the names of those mine accusers. No expectation of their doing me this justice, being held out, I took up the Book of Extracts from the table, observing their refusal called upon me in justice to myself, to read the following minute of the Yearly Meeting, and to urge their compliance with my

reasonable request in conformity with its positive injunctions.

“Whereas, it may happen that some friends may suffer much in their reputation and character by a detracting spirit, *which too much prevails among some bearing our name*; who shelter themselves under a pretence, that they say no more than they have heard from others, *but will not discover who they are*; wherefore, to prevent this evil of reporting and tale-bearing, it is agreed, that such reporters or tale-bearers *shall either discover their authors*, or be dealt with and testified against as the authors thereof. 1744.”—Book of Extracts, 2d Edit. p. 41.

The overseers, nevertheless, persisted in declining to express any intention to acquaint me who any of their informants were. And I think only one friend, Charles Palmer, uttered a sentiment in favour of my request, as either reasonable in itself, or obligatory upon them by the express provisions of the above minute.

After this I adverted to the proposal of Richard Bowman, on the minute respecting me being first read, that all the latter part of it, which defined one branch of the charges whereon I had been visited, should be omitted, alleging that the former part was expressed in such general terms as would naturally, and almost necessarily, subject me to an indeterminate extent of calumny and detraction. And, as I had already been subjected to much of this, which was entirely unfounded and highly injurious to my reputation, I earnestly called upon the Meeting, as men and as Christians, to recognize explicitly the specific charges against me, and not by their own act to expose me to a continuance of similar injuries.

The Meeting, however, declined recognizing any specific charge against me in the minute, or to insert in it any reference to them, so as to mark out the precise boundaries of the accusation!

Henry Knight proposed qualifying the terms of the minute as it now stood, by saying, instead of "doctrines," some doctrines, or "some opinions," and the latter phrase was adopted.

William Binns objected to the words "*general belief* of the Society," and proposed to substitute for them "*principles* of the Society," which the clerk inserted in the place of the former phrase.

Samuel Marsh observed that he thought the minute, as it stood, would answer *the purpose very well*.

I replied, there was no doubt but it might answer the purpose of subjecting me to an unknown extent of calumny and detraction. That if the Meeting separated without doing me the justice to record whatever charges they recognized on their books, in *specific terms*, such an effect might be considered as an unavoidable consequence. A minute expressed in such general terms might also be thought to authorise an inquisitorial inquiry into my sentiments respecting other points of doctrine, and not confine the inquiry, as it ought, to the charges now alleged against me.

With regard to these, it was doubtful whether it could be truly said, that private admonition, *according to gospel order*, had been duly extended. But, if the proposed inquiry was carried farther, under the supposed sanction of this minute, it would be certain this indispensable preliminary step could not have been taken, and therefore, as well as for other reasons, I should positively object to entering upon any fresh subjects of investigation while these were pending.

Samuel Marsh attempted to defend the general terms in which the minute was drawn up, as "allowing the friends who might be appointed to visit me, to enter upon such other subjects of inquiry as *they might think necessary*."

Richard Bowman remarked, that the printed paper and Book of Rules which they had laid on the table, (that is, the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, and the Preface to the Rules, &c. of the London Unitarian Book Society,) "*contained the proofs on which what is asserted in the minute was founded.*" Henry Knight said "*I consider that to be the case.*"

The minute being so far settled, it only remained to nominate a committee to visit me and report. The first person proposed for this service *was Samuel Marsh!* After a short pause, he suggested the expediency of applying to the Quarterly Meeting for assistance, as our Meeting was at all times small, and, at present, some of the most suitable of our members to undertake a case of this nature, were absent. If they did not, as the Quarterly Meeting was to be held next week, "*the matter would probably be hung up much longer than was desirable ;*" as, if the assistance of the Quarterly Meeting should be found necessary, and he thought a case never occurred which appeared more to require it, that assistance could not be had till the spring Quarterly Meeting, *three months hence*. The Meeting, he also observed, had not long ago applied to the Quarterly Meeting for its assistance in a case, previous to the party being at all visited. Several other members of the Meeting were for applying to the Quarterly Meeting for a committee to assist them in the first instance.

Charles Palmer, and one or two other friends, were of opinion, that it was irregular and improper to apply to the Quarterly Meeting for assistance, before the Meeting had attempted to do its own business, and found it was not able to do it to its own satisfaction.

I expressed my concurrence in these sentiments, and informed the Meeting that if they did apply to the Quarterly Meeting, in the first instance as had been proposed, I should consider the indefinite

terms in which the minute was drawn up, still more exceptionable, as exposing me to a wider range of talebearing and detraction. That I thought it was necessary the Meeting should hear before it separated, at least part of my last letter to the overseers. And I requested them to lay my letters to them before the Meeting for that purpose, which Henry Knight did, but Richard Bowman, in a manner *equally disrespectful to his colleague and to the Meeting*, took up the packet from the table, and put it unopened into his pocket, *without one word of explanation or apology!* I produced a copy of the letter and read two extracts therefrom, respecting my belief in Christ and his doctrines, for which see pages 22 and 23.

Such were my solemn declarations to Henry Knight on the 26th of August, and these I afterwards read to him and Richard Bowman on the 6th of the following month, verbatim, as I have now read them to the meeting. I trust they will tend in some measure to prevent erroneous impressions going forth against me, in consequence of the very general and vague terms in which the minute is drawn up.

Henry Knight said he wished to ask me, as I professed to believe all that Christ is recorded in the New Testament to have said concerning himself, what my sentiments were respecting that text in which Christ says, "I and my Father are one," and that passage in his solemn prayer, wherein he says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

To which I replied that I had already informed him I had no objection to those texts, although I might to his construction of them, and read the same to him and Richard Bowman at the first conference they had with me, as recorded in my minutes, p. 3.

Henry Knight then inquired of me, whether I *had not sent* a parcel of those papers, meaning the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, to Worcester to be distributed. To which I replied, *I had not.*

Richard Bowman informed the Meeting (in which Henry Knight expressed his concurrence,) that I had received their visits in a very friendly, open manner, as he had no doubt I should any Friends the Meeting might appoint to visit me.

The proposal to apply to the Quarterly Meeting for assistance being at length given up, a minute was made, appointing four friends to visit me and report.

To give my readers a full and distinct view of the two offences on which the proceedings against me were professedly founded, I shall lay before them the following documents which were presented to the Monthly Meeting by the overseers, as containing the evidence on which their accusation rested: viz. A copy of the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, which I had promoted the circulation of; and, A copy of the Preface to the Rules of the Book Society to which I had become a Subscriber.

REMARKS ON THE QUAKER'S YEARLY EPISTLE.

To the Editor of the Monthly Repository.

SIR,

Aug. 10, 1810.

In the number for July (p. 365) you have inserted, among other articles of religious intelligence, the last Epistle from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, usually called Quakers. The caution it recommends to all its members “to use moderation in their manner of living, and in this way to seek relief from the increasing expense of the times in which we live, rather than by engaging in more extensive and often

hazardous schemes in trade," must, I think, be esteemed judicious and appropriate counsel. Indeed, the general tenor of the moral advice it contains, has been highly and deservedly commended in several of the public prints, and will, I hope, by their means, have a salutary influence on the conduct of many who are not members of this respectable Society.

I cannot, however, bestow equal praise on such parts of this Epistle as are more properly theological, and especially on the manner in which it quotes passages of Scripture, or makes use of its peculiar phraseology. To pass over the inapplicable quotations from Isaiah in the first paragraph, and the highly figurative, but no less flattering compliment to their preachers, as if their ministry was super-eminently a source of light to their hearers, I would first notice an improper application of a scriptural phrase, and then make a few remarks on the abuse to which such a practice is liable.

"The more we can abide under a sense of our own wants, the readier and the more earnestly," says this Epistle, "shall we apply for help to him *upon whom help is laid*." That is, the more sensible we are that we need assistance, the more shall we be disposed to apply for help, not to the original fountain of all power, the giver "of every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—James i. 17, but to one, as the very words import, *who himself received help from another*; upon whom help was laid or conferred, as the context evidently shews.

The phrase is used in the 89th psalm, and I believe no where else in the Old or New Testament. "I, (the Holy One of Israel) have laid help upon one that is mighty. I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. With whom my

*We here evidently object to all prayer
addressed to the Lord Jesus. Did not the
Father send him to him. I saw not his*

hand shall be established, mine arm also shall strengthen him." vs. 19, 20, 21.

The writers of this Epistle cannot, I should think, have intended to inculcate the propriety of addressing our supplications to such a character as the above text describes, under any of the trials to which we may be exposed in this preparatory state. But a secondary or mystical sense of many texts of scripture having been often contended for, I would endeavour to shew that no such construction of the text, can, in this instance, be successfully pleaded, whether it may or not in any other; for it adds, vs. 25, 26, "I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, *Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.*" Hence it appears, whatever secondary or prophetic construction the text may be thought to admit, that the person upon whom it says help was laid, acknowledged the Holy One of Israel to be his Father, *his God*, and the rock of his salvation, and therefore cannot surely be justly considered as being himself the proper object, to whom Christians, the professed disciples of Jesus, should offer up their supplications.

After censuring, in very suitable terms, an undue love of ease and worldly enjoyment, the paragraph which inculcates the salutary caution I have already noticed says, "We believe, however, and we are glad in believing, that there are numbers who act upon sounder principles than these; who knowing, as saith the apostle, that 'the fashion of this world passeth away,' are really desirous of 'using this world as not abusing it.' These we would encourage to hold on in the way cast up before them, trusting in *the Lord*, who hath declared that all things necessary will be given to those who seek first *His kingdom.*"

The declaration of Christ, here alluded to, is not

did not the anarchy of the human mind "Love
ours, because in my spirit" was not this

truly stated. Both the evangelists who have recorded it, Mat. vi. 33, and Luke xii. 31, say the promise related to those who seek first *the kingdom of God.*" Whereas the Epistle represents it as referring to those who seek first "*the kingdom of Christ,*" which is no less than to substitute one person for another: *the Son for God the Father.* If such liberties as these may be taken with texts of Scripture, it may be made apparently to countenance any set of notions, however contradictory they may be to the genuine sense of the passages which are imagined to support them, and to the general tenor of Scripture doctrine.

It may perhaps be said, that the variation in this instance is rather verbal than real, that the sense of the passage is preserved, although the terms in which it is expressed are changed; that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are substantially the same.

In a certain qualified sense I admit they are, but not entirely and permanently. For when the end cometh, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom *to God, even the Father.* 1 Cor. xiii. 24. In like manner "*the Gospel of God,*" although it came originally from the Father, as the apostle Paul asserts, Rom. i. 1, 2. is nevertheless called in the 16th verse of the same chapter, and elsewhere, in an inferior sense "*the Gospel of Christ.*" The apostle even calls it *his Gospel*, according to the received text in the next chapter, v. 16. and again in the xvi. chapter of the same epistle, v. 25. But in both places he emphatically asserts the unrivalled power of God, whether he speaks of it as acting by the agency of Jesus Christ, or otherwise.

To return to the Epistle.—Immediately after the above extract, which, without any authority from the text, substitutes *Christ* in the place of *God the Father*, it goes on in the following manner: "Thus

trusting, *and endeavouring to apply to him,*" Christ, "*in secret supplication*, in the difficulties that must in a state of probation be the lot of all, we may humbly hope that in our several proportions, we shall grow in the truth."

In reflecting on so palpable a perversion of a declaration of the lip of truth, and on the unscriptural injunction which seems to have been founded thereon, I cannot but feel strongly persuaded, that a more assiduous study of the New Testament, would more effectually promote a real growth in *Christian truth*, than any endeavours to apply to Christ in secret or open supplication, both of which are in direct opposition to his uniform commands to his followers, to look up to his Father and our Father, *to his God and our God*, as the only proper object of prayer. So far was the meek and lowly Jesus from directing his disciples to apply to him for help, in subsequent ages of the Christian church, that he says, "*in that day,*" viz. after his resurrection, "*ye shall ask me nothing*—whatsoever ye shall ask *the Father* in my name, *he will give it you.*"

In the concluding paragraph "the never-ceasing duty of humility," is pressingly recommended from the consideration, that "even our blessed Lord declared himself to be meek and lowly in heart." He did so. And it is highly incumbent on his professed followers earnestly to aspire after "the same holy temper." Our great exemplar possessed this dignified state of mind, in the highest degree, according to our best conceptions, estimating his character as it is pourtrayed by the evangelists. But they nowhere tell us, that he ascribed similar qualities of mind to his Father, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, *the only God!* 1 Tim. i. 17.

The sacred writers frequently speak of the holiness, mercy, underived power, wisdom, omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord God Almighty,

*The author ought to have given the fact
that Christ said this in his character as
the Father's Son.*

but never of his meekness, humility, or lowliness of mind. Nor do they ever represent Christ as having endowed mankind with those talents, which they possess "by nature," as rational beings, *the offspring of God*. These are always represented by them as the gift of God. Yet this Epistle plainly insinuates, that the natural talents which mankind possess, have been bestowed on them by Christ, without any mention of the Father. "However great the talents, *with which he,*" Christ, "*may have endowed us by nature,* or however he may replenish our souls with the more excellent gifts of his holy spirit, still we have nothing which we have not received."

This last inference is undoubtedly just, and our great Master has repeatedly assured us, that all the powers even he himself possessed, *were given him of his Father*—that *of himself he could do nothing*. Yet does this Epistle, without any reference to the source whence all his powers were derived, ascribe omnipotence to the meek and humble Jesus!

Self-examination is no doubt an important Christian duty, the discharge of which is in no degree dependent on the unscriptural sentiment connected therewith in the following passage. "Let us then, dear friends, be willing to examine ourselves, and know whether we are indeed humble followers of a lowly-minded, *though omnipotent Saviour*." That Christ was an all-sufficient Saviour, as being perfectly qualified to accomplish the great work which *his Father gave him to do*, I reverently believe, and perhaps the term omnipotent may have been used on this occasion in some such sense; and not as intended to assert his absolute and underived power over all. It would be well, however, to adhere more closely to the language, and especially to the sense of scripture, on such important subjects as these.

That great Being, who, in contrast with all those

all things were made by him, and without him nothing came into being.

real or imaginary beings “that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth,” is styled “*God the Father*,” is represented as saying to the people of Israel, “thou shalt know no God, but me, for there is no Saviour beside me.” Hosea xiii. 4.

He is the Saviour of Saviours; of whom Isaiah says, xix. 20; “he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.”

From the general drift of such Epistles, of the same Annual Assembly, as I have seen in your instructive Miscellany, or in other periodical publications, I was not a little surprised at finding in this such passages as I have noticed; never having before observed, in the writings of Quakers, a profession of similar doctrines. Perhaps some member of the Society who may see these Remarks, if you should insert them in the Repository, will inform your readers whether I have rightly understood the tenor of this Epistle; and if so, whether the sentiments it contains are those of the Society generally? And if they are, whether such were also the doctrines of the early Quakers, with regard to the proper object of worship—the person or being who bestowed on mankind their natural faculties—and in what sense they consider Christ as omnipotent?

The liberal manner in which your work has been conducted from its commencement, affords every reasonable facility to an amicable discussion of all theological topics, and holds out equal privileges to the advocates of both sides of every question. On such a stage, truth, and especially religious truth, is sure to prevail, if its friends are not faithless to its cause, and ingloriously desert its standard. Wishing its cause and yours, for its sake, every success, which may comport with the dispensations of unerring wisdom, and boundless benevolence,

I remain, yours, &c.

AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.

PREFACE TO THE RULES, &c. OF THE LONDON
UNITARIAN BOOK SOCIETY. INSTITUTED 1791.

CHRISTIANITY, proceeding from God, must be of infinite importance; and a more essential service cannot be rendered to mankind, than to advance the interests of truth and virtue; to promote peace, liberty and good order in society; to accelerate the improvement of the species; and to exalt the character, and secure the greatest ultimate happiness of individuals, by disseminating the right principles of religion, and by exciting the attention of men to the genuine doctrines of revelation.

THIS is the chief object of THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, BY DISTRIBUTING *such* BOOKS as appear to the members of the Society to contain the most rational views of the gospel, and to be most free from the errors by which it has long been sullied and obscured. Error, voluntary or involuntary, so far as it extends, must have a pernicious influence. The members of this Society think, therefore, that they are doing signal service to the cause of truth and good morals, by endeavouring to clear the Christian system from all foreign incumbrances, and by representing the doctrines of revelation in their primitive simplicity. Truth must ultimately be serviceable to virtue.

The fundamental principles of this Society are, That there is but ONE GOD, the SOLE Former, Supporter and Governor of the universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is one mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life.

The beneficial influence of these truths upon the moral conduct of men will be in proportion to the

confidence with which they are received into the mind, and the attention with which they are regarded. Consequently, all foreign opinions, which men have attached to this primitive system of Christian doctrine, and which tend to divert their thoughts from these fundamental principles, are in a degree injurious to the cause of religion and virtue. While therefore many well-meaning persons are propagating with zeal, opinions, which the members of this society judge to be unscriptural and idolatrous, they think it their duty to oppose the further progress of such pernicious errors, and publicly to avow their firm attachment to the doctrine of the UNITY OF God, of his UNRIVALLED and UNDIVIDED authority and dominion; and their belief that Jesus Christ, the most distinguished of the prophets, is the CREATURE and MESSENGER of God, and not his EQUAL, nor his VICEGERENT, in the formation and government of the world, nor CO-PARTNER with him in divine honours, as some have strangely supposed. And they are desirous to try the experiment, whether the cause of true religion and virtue may not be most effectually promoted upon proper Unitarian principles, and whether the plain, unadulterated truths of Christianity, when fairly taught and inculcated, be not of themselves sufficient to form the minds of those, who sincerely embrace them, to that true dignity and excellence of character to which the gospel was intended to elevate them.

Rational Christians have hitherto been too cautious of publicly acknowledging their principles; and this disgraceful timidity has been prejudicial to the progress of truth and virtue. It is now high time that the friends of genuine Christianity should stand forth and avow themselves. The number of such, it is hoped, will be found to be much greater than many apprehend. And their example, if accompanied with, and recommended by, a corres-

pendent purity of life and morals, will naturally attract the attention of others, and produce that freedom of inquiry, that liberal discussion, and that fearless profession of principles embraced after due examination, which can be formidable to nothing but to error and vice, and which must eventually be subservient to the cause of truth and virtue, and to the best interests of mankind.

As the committee appointed to visit me have so ably described, in their report to the Monthly Meeting, the leading features of their visits, it is unnecessary to give my minutes of those conferences at full length. I shall, therefore, for the sake of brevity, and to avoid repetition, omit them entirely in this place. Such parts as may require notice will be afterwards introduced.

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

1st Month, 23d, 1812.

On the minutes of the last Meeting being read, and the business arising therefrom being gone through, till the minute respecting my case was in the regular course to be also read, my dear Brother, who, as usual, read the minutes of the preceding meeting (which he did not attend, being from home) observed with much tenderness and feeling, that as it related to a subject *on which he could take no part*, he hoped the meeting would indulge him by not taking it up till the other business was finished.

Richard Bowman very promptly offered to take up the Monthly Meeting Book from before my Brother, saying, "*I can read the minute.*"

To which my Brother replied with increased emotion, "It is not merely reading the minute, but, *as I can take no part in the proceedings respecting the*

case, I wish not to be present at any part of the discussion..”

The reading of the minute was accordingly deferred, and I can truly say this brotherly, delicate and judicious resolution of one of the best men whom I have ever known, relieved me much, as it may save him considerable pain ; and I am assured he will not lend his ears to the vague and groundless aspersions on my religious sentiments which have long been in circulation.

When the other business was nearly gone through, *my Brother and his Son left the Meeting.*

The minute respecting my case being read, Samuel Marsh rose on behalf of the committee to report their having visited me. But before he had made it, he was interrupted by Sparkes Moline, who inquired of Samuel Marsh, if he was not going to lay before the Meeting a report from the committee. And being answered in the affirmative, he observed, that although he was not a member of the meeting, and was not at all aware that such a case was before it, he hoped he should be excused for suggesting, that before the report of the committee was made, Thomas Foster should be requested to withdraw. He was much concerned that a friend, whom he had so long known and esteemed, should be under such circumstances. But by the minute which had been read, he was to be considered as a delinquent under *dealing*, and therefore he thought it was irregular and improper for a person so situated to sit as it were in judgment upon his own case.

Samuel Marsh said he was of the same mind, and had never known an instance of the kind before. It was usual to give a person under *dealing* notice that he might attend, if he chose to be heard previous to a testimony of disownment being issued against him, but not to be present at any of the previous discussions on the case.

Richard Bowman expressed his concurrence in this opinion, but observed that Thomas Foster having made a particular point of being present when the overseers presented their accusation against him, they supposed he might also wish to be present at the subsequent discussions on his case. He thought Samuel Marsh had expressed himself rather unguardedly about disownment, but he could not mean that any conclusion of that kind was come to with regard to the present case. Samuel Marsh replied, Certainly not.

Richard Bowman then observed, it would be proper for the Meeting to consider what was the usual practice, but he added, I have not been able to find any express minute that will authorize our desiring Thomas Foster to withdraw. I do not say there is no such minute in the Book of Extracts, but I cannot find one. Perhaps some other Friend who is present may be able to point one out. John Harris also admitted that he could find no such minute, and therefore he supposed if Thomas Foster chose to be present, the Meeting would not be justified in requiring him to withdraw.

One or two Friends said they thought the Meeting might require me to withdraw, in conformity to the usual practice in such cases; but the Meeting did not seem inclined to act upon that presumption.

William Batger said he thought it would be kind of Thomas Foster to withdraw, as there were a number of Friends who might have something to say on the case, and yet having no wish to hurt his feelings, would not be likely to express their minds so freely as if he were absent.

Sparkes Moline expressed his wish that the whole proceedings in this case might be conducted in love, in charity, and in a Christian spirit. It was, he said, of much importance, and required Friends to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

When it appeared to me that no other Friend was

inclined to address the Meeting, I inquired whether I might consider myself at liberty to express my view of the subject. That, with the Meeting's permission, I would do so in a few words. The clerk observed there could be no doubt but that every Friend present was at liberty to express his sentiments on the subject before the Meeting.

I observed it could hardly be necessary for me, after what the Meeting had heard from two of the committee, to insist upon there being no minute in the Book of Extracts, that would warrant the exclusion of a person, situated as I was, from any Meeting for discipline, and especially from a Monthly Meeting, while his own case was under consideration. The contrary practice which had been alluded to, rested upon no rule of the Society, upon no principle of justice, but arose, as I conceived, merely from the choice or the ignorance of the persons, who generally happened to be so circumstanced.

As to the observations of William Batger, I hoped no Friend would be less free in expressing his sentiments in my presence, than if I were absent. No one need be under the least apprehension of hurting my feelings, by saying fairly, candidly and openly to my face, all that they might think applicable to the occasion. I wished my being present, to operate as an encouragement to every one to speak his sentiments with the utmost freedom. If the proceedings of the Meeting were as I hoped, to be conducted in a Christian spirit, and upon Christian principles, why should any Friend decline speaking out, because the party accused was present, to know what was alleged against him?

With respect to the practice of the Society, I could inform the Meeting of one instance, that had fallen within my own personal knowledge, many years ago, while I was under an appointment of this Meeting, as one of the door-keepers to the Yearly

Meeting. On a young man offering to go into the Meeting-house, some of the other door-keepers objected to it, on the ground of his being under *dealing*. But the case being referred, by my desire, to the committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting, to assist the door-keepers as occasions may require, they decided that he ought to be admitted, and he was admitted accordingly, and is still a member of the Society.

At length all idea of exercising such a stretch of authority against me for the present being given up, Samuel Marsh reported that the committee had paid me two visits, but were not prepared to make any farther report. On which a minute to that purport was made continuing the committee.

Sparkes Moline said he felt much for his dear friend who had withdrawn, for me, and for the Meeting, and he still hoped, if mutual goodwill and Christian charity was kept in view on both sides, the parties would come nearer together. Richard Bowman shook his head, as if there was no chance of that. And Sparkes Moline expressed his great concern on the occasion; adding, that he thought if any individual did entertain sentiments contrary to the principles of the Society, it would be more candid to say so, and quietly to withdraw, rather than to give Friends so much trouble.

I replied, if I were conscious that my sentiments on the points objected to me, were contrary to the genuine doctrines of the Society, I might probably act as he had recommended: but I thought all such remarks highly improper as tending to prejudge the matters at issue. The overseers knew I had uniformly urged my agreement with those doctrines, as did the committee also; and most of the Friends now present knew that at the last Meeting, I denied the truth and justice of the minute recorded against me, in consequence of their accusations.

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING,

2nd Month, 20th, 1812.

When the business of the Meeting was gone through, except that which related to my case, my dear Brother and his Son left the Meeting.

The minute continuing the committee, with the minute of their appointment being read, it was proposed that I should be requested to withdraw. Several friends, not only members of the meeting, but others who happened to be present, urged the necessity, on their ideas of good order, for me to withdraw, although no minute of the Yearly Meeting directed what was to be done in such a case.

Sparkes Moline proposed that the clerk should officially request me to withdraw, conformably to the practice which custom had established. This proposal was seconded by several friends.

I remarked, that the same friend made a similar proposal at the last Meeting, when he rested it on the presumption that my delinquency was established, the moment I was accused. If so, the appointment of a committee was a useless empty form. I was the more inclined to notice such an idea, as I knew it had been warmly insisted upon by some active disciplinarians amongst us, and there were one or two minutes in the Book of Extracts which looked a little that way; but I should be unwilling to suppose such could be their proper construction.

If it were, after a person was once accused, justly or unjustly, the subsequent proceedings were of no real consequence, and could not affect the ultimate decision. The New Testament bore witness that heathens had much more correct ideas of what was due to an accused person, on the principles of justice, as the grounds on which the apostle Paul was sent to Rome to take his trial would prove.

George Saunders (of Whitby) urged, what he called, the impropriety of my being present to sit in judgment upon others, when I was myself a delinquent. I called upon the Meeting to say, whether I had acted in any such manner? I had no such motive for being present, nor any other of a personal nature: but I considered the constitutional right of a person, situated as I was, to be present to hear what was alleged against him, so important, that I did not chuse to do any thing towards the establishment of a precedent to the contrary. The common practice which had been adverted to, had arisen, as I conceived, from the majority of cases brought before meetings for discipline, being for some breach of morality, on the facts of which there was no question; and therefore the parties had no wish to be present.

George Saunders said, he supposed I must, by my own practice, have countenanced a similar treatment of other persons under *dealing*, and therefore he thought, when it came to be my own case, I ought to submit to the general practice of the Society.

I replied, that I was not conscious I had ever united in an attempt to deprive any person of such a right. I once took the other side of the question, many years ago, as I informed the last Monthly Meeting.

Sparkes Moline observed, that he thought the case I then adduced not at all in point, as it related to a person attending the Yearly Meeting, and not sitting in judgment on his own case. I reminded him that I had been so far from mentioning it as a perfectly similar case, that I then insisted on the superior importance of an accused person being present to know what was alleged against him, before a Monthly Meeting, and attending any other Meeting for discipline.

The report of the committee being at length read,

it was urged that my being present obstructed the Meeting from entering upon so free a consideration of *their own committee's report* as they might if I *would withdraw*.

George Saunders proposed for me to withdraw till the Meeting had concluded whether to receive the report, or not, and to be called in afterwards to hear the conclusion of the Meeting. But he was of opinion, he said, that the Meeting had better apply to the Quarterly Meeting for assistance. He was informed that the latter proposal had been already made and considered.

I observed that the Meeting was certainly in a more favourable situation to decide impartially between any two parties, after hearing both, than to record their judgment on the evidence of one side, before the other was heard; which, if I understood it rightly, was the proposal that had been made.

George Knight observed he thought I ought to withdraw, for although a prisoner was present during the trial, the jury frequently left the court to consider the case among themselves and agree upon a verdict.

I replied, as the practice of courts of law had been referred to, I must beg leave to state how very different that was from the course now proposed. In a court of justice the accusers do not sit on the bench, but the judge was always considered as counsel for the party accused; no unimportant part of the duties of his office. The fullest and fairest hearing was allowed. In the case before the Meeting my accusers were not only the mere agents of others whom they refused naming, in open violation of as express a rule of the Yearly Meeting as language could form, but sat in judgment upon their own accusation. The Meeting thus assumed the united offices of accuser, judge and jury, and as far as their power extended, of executioner also. The exercise of such

powers required great patience and moderation on the part of the Meeting, and especially in cases like the present of mere difference of apprehension upon matters of faith, arising in my mind principally from the ambiguity of language.

William Binns said he had been present when this case was first laid before the Meeting; he observed, it was not usual for persons under *dealing* to be present during the discussion of their own case by the Meeting: yet he was desirous of viewing the matter impartially, and in so doing, it appeared to him that every person accused was entitled to a full and fair hearing. He therefore proposed that I should be permitted to offer in my own defence whatever I might think proper; and having so done, to leave the Meeting to deliberate thereon.

Some Friends approved this proposal, but were for exacting an engagement from me, previous to my being heard, that I would afterwards withdraw. To which I replied, it would be quite time enough to take that point into consideration, after I had been allowed the reasonable privilege of saying what I thought proper to offer to the Meeting at this time.

The committee's report being now read, I observed I could easily perceive the general injustice of it; but written charges required deliberate consideration, which I might bestow upon them after I had received a copy of the report. I should not even attempt to make any particular reply to them at this time. It would be highly unreasonable to expect it.

At length I was permitted to proceed in reading the following written address to the Meeting.

Dear Friends,

Unusual as such a mode of addressing you may be, I have, on mature consideration, adopted it instead of a verbal address; that I may do it with more de-

liberation, and that you may have a better opportunity of examining the pertinency and validity of what I may offer, respecting the most material parts of the case, by reviewing as often as you may deem necessary, any part of it; so that the whole subject at issue may be thoroughly understood, as it ought to be, before you can be competent to decide thereon. If this object be steadily kept in view, it can hardly fail also to save the time of the Meeting, as it will enable me to lay before you in a smaller compass, and perhaps in a more correct manner, what I may deem necessary to offer in my own defence, in reply to the charges which have been exhibited against me.

Every accused person, you must know, is entitled to a patient, attentive, dispassionate and impartial hearing. But a person cannot have this, if the minds of those who are to sit in judgment upon him are influenced by rumours to his disadvantage, that may have been circulated respecting his general sentiments and conduct. It becomes, therefore, an indispensable duty on them to dismiss from their minds, as much as possible, every trace of such impressions, before they enter upon the exercise of judicial powers.

Nor do I consider this obligation less binding on them in such a case as this than in any other, either because their powers are more limited than those which the civil magistrate possesses, or some other professed Christian churches have exercised; or because it relates to matters of opinion, and the manner in which I have aided in their propagation.

These rumours, if vague, indefinite, false and groundless, as I know many of them to be, ought not, in any degree, to prejudice the minds of my constitutional judges. Your attention will, therefore, I trust, be strictly confined to the two specific charges alleged against me, 12th month, 19th last,

on which the minute appointing a committee to visit me *thereon* was founded.

At that Meeting, as you know, I objected to the indefinite manner in which the minute was drawn up. And I have recently been credibly-informed that such a use has been made of it as I then anticipated: copies of it having been handed about, or equally vague rumours respecting its import circulated amongst Friends of other Meetings. Yet no one can possibly discover from the minute what my offence is.

The minute equally fits the case of a person who had denied the being and providence of God, and all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; or, of one who had merely professed to be of opinion that the word *you*, in the English language, is a singular, as well as a plural pronoun, and might, without a breach of any precept of the Christian religion, be used accordingly, as the nouns *sheep* and *deer* are in speaking of one only, or of a *flock* or *herd* of those animals. Or, it may equally well apply to a person who held, in common with others of every class amongst us, that the Society cannot, in consistency with its testimony against an hireling ministry, supported by a forced maintenance, object to the payment of impropriate tythes.

By some persons each of these opinions would be deemed "contrary to the principles of the Society;" but no man of a clear, sound mind can possibly think an error on these several subjects equally dangerous and deserving of censure.

The next circumstance I have to mention is, that the request and demand I made to the overseers in the face of the Meeting, to make known to me the names of my accusers, has not yet been complied with, notwithstanding the positive injunctions of the minute of 1744. Book of Extracts, p. 41.

The overseers reported to the Meeting "that I

had received their visits in a very friendly, open manner, as they had no doubt I should any Friends the Meeting might appoint to visit me."

Of these visits I shall only say, that just at the close of the last, the overseers "unitedly urged their incompetency to enter into a discussion of such abstruse subjects" as those were, which they came to hold conferences with me about, "expressing their hope, nevertheless, that I should not deem it unfriendly in them if they just mentioned the matter to the Monthly Meeting to-morrow, *for the sake of getting it off their shoulders.*"

The first of these visits was paid me on the 6th of Sept. the other on Oct. the 23rd, when I read to them my minutes of the former conference, and on the 27th of the same month those of the latter, the general correctness of which they admitted.

As the overseers waved their intention of laying the case before the Meeting on the 24th, I addressed a letter to them, [inserted p. 14 to 21] dated Nov. 5, which they treated as undeserving any notice. That you may judge of this I request them to produce it, and that it may now be read.

From this time the overseers never spoke to me on the subject till the 17th after meeting, when they informed me they intended to report the case to the Meeting on the 21st. This design they waved, as I was obliged to leave home; but told me they meant to proceed in part upon the 20th rule, under the head Meetings for Discipline.

The same evening I wrote them a letter, [inserted p. 22 to 25] relative to their intention, which I also desire may now be read. You will recollect I did not even know the overseers had received it till after I had been publicly accused by them on the 19th of the following month, when they informed me before you, that they "did not deem any communication with me necessary concerning its contents."

These were the circumstances under which I was accused before you. During the discussion respecting the minute to be made thereon, it appears proper to notice that Samuel Marsh observed he "did not at all know the case was likely to be brought forward *till last week.*"

This acknowledgment of having been previously acquainted with the case ought to have disqualified him for this appointment. Yet was he the first person nominated! I was forcibly struck with this circumstance at the time, but I did not chuse to object to his nomination.

Before I review their visits, I would, as a matter of much importance, recall your attention to the actual state of the case as it stood at the time of their appointment. You will recollect that two distinct charges, *and two only* were presented to the Meeting against me by the overseers. One of these was, my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, in support of which they produced one of its Books of Rules, with a List of the Members, in which they observed my name appeared as a member for life. The other related to my having given away some Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, a copy of which they laid on the table, alleging that those Remarks *found fault with the Epistle.*

The truth of these allegations against me I never questioned; but at each of the conferences I had with them, I denied, as I do still, the justice of the inferences they deduced from them. Yet neither this, nor my two subsequent letters to the overseers, prevailed upon them to pay me another visit. And under such circumstances as these, they accused me of having imbibed "some opinions contrary to the principles of the Society," not on the ground of any evidence, but on the presumption *that their own inferences from those facts were well founded.*

On the case being reported to you, some discus-

sion took place respecting the proper manner of your recognizing such a charge, *but none at all on the accusation, or the validity of the evidence on which it rests.* The consideration of this was deferred by mutual consent, and a committee was appointed for that purpose.

The first visit they paid me was on the 15th of last month; at an early part of which I proposed to them the following queries, to which I requested plain and distinct answers, that I might clearly understand the nature and extent of the charges exhibited against me, by the minute of their appointment, and the grounds on which they rest, viz.

1st. What the "opinions" are, which this minute charges me with having "imbibed," and affirms to be "contrary to the principles of the Society?"

2nd. What "the principles of the Society" are, *to which this minute refers*, and where are they to be found clearly and explicitly laid down?

3rd. At what period of my life, and from whence do you charge me with having "imbibed" those "opinions," and on what evidence?

4th. In what censurable manner have I "aided in propagating" those "opinions," and what rule of the Society of Friends, do you allege I have thereby broken?

5th. Admitting I may have "imbibed" some erroneous "opinions," or fallen into certain involuntary errors, on what principles do you imagine yourselves justified in imputing criminality to me, for having so "imbibed" them, or for having, under a belief they were Christian truths of the highest importance, "aided in propagating" them?

To these I annexed the following query on another subject.

6th. In compliance with the positive injunctions of the minute in the Book of Extracts, No, 6, under the head "Defamation and Detraction," I once

more call upon the overseers, who have already visited me, and are now present, as part of the Monthly Meeting's committee, to make known to me the names of all the persons to whom they have referred at former conferences with me as their informants, and also the full extent of all they have heard alleged against me, by such persons, in reference to the "opinions" I am charged, by the minute of the Monthly Meeting, with having "imbibed," and with having "aided in propagating?"

Not obtaining any definite reply to either of these queries, during this conference, I delivered a copy to the committee. They are, in my opinion, pertinent to the occasion, and such as I was entitled to put to them in the situation in which your record of the overseers accusation had placed me.

At this conference the committee, instead of confining themselves to the proper business of their appointment, an enquiry into the charges alleged against me to the Meeting, set up pretensions of the most extravagant extent and dangerous tendency to the peace and welfare of the Society. Samuel Marsh had indeed just hinted at something of the kind to the Meeting, previous to his nomination on this committee, by then defending "the general terms in which the minute was drawn up, as allowing the Friends, who might be appointed to visit me, to enter upon such other subjects of enquiry, *as they might think necessary.*" This was intelligible enough, but the sentiment not being supported by any other person, I was satisfied to rest the matter upon the previous resolution I had expressed to the Meeting, that "I should positively object to entering upon *any fresh subjects of investigation while these were pending.*"

Notwithstanding which the committee insisted upon their right under the general terms in which the minute was drawn up, *to enquire into any of my*

sentiments which they deemed contrary to the principles of the Society.

Samuel Marsh was for pushing this inquisitorial enquiry into my general conduct for ten years past, both with regard to anonymous publications, which he said were *reputed to be mine*, as also to the sentiments *I had occasionally expressed in Meetings for discipline*, from which he most unjustly inferred that I was actuated by a hostile disposition towards the Society, than which imputation *nothing can be more unfounded*.

To these invectives I replied, that I should be ready to meet any accusation they could allege against me, when it was brought forward in a regular orderly manner; but that I should refuse to enter into any conference with them, as a committee, respecting any points except those which the overseers had alleged against me to the Monthly Meeting: that it would be a violation of gospel order and the wholesome rules of the Society, to enter upon any other subjects of enquiry, after I had thus been publicly denounced as a delinquent: that I was so well satisfied of this, that I would rather leave the room, than sanction by my example so dangerous an abuse of the discipline. Their subsequent and reiterated attempts to act upon these inquisitorial principles, have however induced me in a few instances to depart from this resolution.

On one of these occasions they called for Penn's "Sandy Foundation Shaken," and read the last paragraph of the postscript, not on account of the sound scriptural acknowledgment it contains, of the *Unity and Supremacy of God the Father*, but to question me respecting my belief in the miraculous conception of Christ. To which I declined answering, for the reasons I had before assigned, but called upon them to state whatever they might have to allege

against me, respecting this tenet, which I told them was held by many Unitarians.

At the same time I remarked, that however true the narrative of it might be, I did not consider it as an indispensable, fundamental Christian doctrine, judging of it by the practice of the sacred writers. For I believed two of the evangelists have passed it over in silence, and the writers of all the apostolic epistles. Nor was it, so far as I knew, any where else mentioned or alluded to, than in the first chapters of Matthew and Luke.

One of the committee observed, he supposed they might conclude from what I had said, that I deemed the authenticity of those chapters doubtful. I replied, that I thought it was sufficient for me to say, I did not consider myself a competent judge of the grounds whereon the authenticity of those chapters rested, although the evidence in their favour did not appear to me so clear, as that on which the general authenticity of the gospels was founded.

[John Harris asked on what account I supposed Christ was called in the scriptures "the Son of God?" I replied, as the promised Messiah; *and especially as having been raised from the dead*: for the apostle says, "he was declared to be the Son of God, *with power, by the resurrection from the dead.*" And many Unitarians thought he was so styled on account of the miraculous conception, as Lardner, Cardale and others.]

The overseers who visited me having represented how improper they deemed it for me, as a member of the Society, to have promoted in any degree the circulation of a paper "which evidently censured what had been approved by the Yearly Meeting," I submitted to the committee, in writing, the following address and queries.

"The overseers having in general terms expressed their strong disapprobation of *all* those parts of the

Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1810, which object to certain passages therein, I should be obliged to them to inform me, on what grounds they conceive those passages can be defended, as sound and scriptural? They are these—

1st. That this Epistle designates the object of prayer, not in any language applied by the sacred writers to “the only true God,” the original Fountain of all power, but as being one who himself received help from another, or one “upon whom help is laid.”

Whether the evident purport of those words, or their scriptural application to a dependent Being is considered, I am wholly at a loss to imagine; and therefore request you to inform me, how it can be thought a fit designation of the Giver of “every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?”

2ndly. That a declaration of Christ’s mentioned in this Epistle is not truly stated; but without any authority from the text, one person is substituted for another, the Son for God the Father.

When you have compared the texts Mat. v. 33, and Luke xii. 31, with the passage in the Epistle, I should like to know, whether you think such an incorrect quotation of scripture in an Yearly Meeting Epistle can be justified? And if you think it may on what grounds?

3rdly. What degree of criminality do you impute to me for having “aided” in the correction of this error, or for pointing out, as these Remarks do, that the immediate consequence of this error apparently was, to hold up Christ as the object of “secret supplication,” instead of his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

4thly. That this Epistle, in opposition to the uniform testimony of the Scriptures, plainly insinuates

that the natural talents which mankind possess were bestowed on them by Christ. You will, I suppose, admit that the Epistle does insinuate what is here asserted: and therefore I have only to request you to point out on what grounds, and under the sanction of what texts you imagine the natural talents of mankind were bestowed on them by Christ, and not by God the Father?

5thly. That this Epistle, without any warrant from scripture, ascribes omnipotence to the meek and humble Jesus. If you are of opinion this position can be successfully maintained, I wish you to inform me, what texts you apprehend authorize the ascription of omnipotence to Christ, without any reference to the source from whence all his powers were derived?

The first observation which the reading of these queries produced, on the part of the committee, was that they "thought they afforded matter that would enable them *to get on.*" That is, I suppose, ground for accusation against me. In pursuit of this expectation, the passage in the Remarks to which the first query relates, being read, Henry Knight remarked, that William Penn had applied the phrase in question to Christ, in the preface to his "No Cross no Crown," as he had pointed out at one of their conferences.

I admitted he had, but observed, that it was applied by William Penn in a very different manner. That it appeared strange to me that it should be again urged, as I thought I had then shewn it to be wholly inapplicable. Penn says, and I fully accord with him, "For in him (Christ) the fullness dwells. Blessed be God, for his sufficiency." "He laid help upon him, that he might be mighty to save all that come to God through him." No words can evince more strongly than these, that Penn ascribed all the sufficiency of Christ to God, who "laid help upon

him." What for? That he might be mighty to save all that come to God through him. Nothing can be in my mind more sound and scriptural.

The committee then read several passages from Penn's "Innocency with her Open Face." Works vol. i, p. 267, and one from his *Christian Quaker*, p. 574 and 5, as explanatory of the former passages and others to the like import in various parts of his works. After which, I requested the committee to inform me, whether, when they spoke of the Divinity of Christ, as a doctrine of our Society, they meant to assert it of the man Christ Jesus, or of that Divine power which dwelt in, and acted by him? To which they replied to the latter, and that they never understood it was ascribed by Friends to the former. I therefore enquired, seeing no difference in our sentiments thereon, whether my explanation on this head was satisfactory to them, or not? They declined saying whether it was, or not, that they must take time to consider it, and *might* let me know at our next conference.

The committee then enquired, whether I thought the ascription of omnipotence to Christ in the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and his being spoken of therein as the object of prayer or worship, was objectionable, supposing those passages were intended to speak of that Divine power, which I admitted to have dwelt in him, and to have acted by him?

I replied, that in my apprehension such language was very liable to be misunderstood, as many who used similar expressions, applied them to the man Christ Jesus. That such persons had sometimes even asserted that God died, when Christ was crucified; a doctrine which George Fox had ably exposed and warmly reprobated.

At length the committee took up the consideration of my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, and read a passage in p. 3, of the

Preface to the Book of Rules, saying, they supposed the term "idolatrous," was therein applied to those who considered Christ as God, and as an object of worship. This appeared not a little singular, when their recent admission is considered. I observed, that it was no doubt applied to those who professed to believe the doctrine of three co-equal and co-eternal Gods, or the doctrine of the Trinity, as laid down in the Athanasian Creed, and to those who considered Christ as the second person in such Trinity, a doctrine that William Penn had, in his "*Sandy Foundation Shaken*," in my opinion, unanswerably shewn to be unscriptural and erroneous. From which as some evidence thereof I read the following passages.

"The Trinity of distinct and separate persons, *in the Unity of essence*, refuted from scripture." Under this head, after quoting a number of texts to prove "that in the days of the first covenant, and prophets, but ONE was the holy God, and God but that holy ONE;" Penn adds from the New Testament, "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but ONE, and that is God. And this is life eternal, that they might know THEE" (Father) adds William Penn in a parenthesis, to put it beyond all doubt whom he understood Christ to address in his most solemn prayer as "the ONLY true God." "Seeing it is ONE God that shall justify." "There be Gods many, but unto us there is but ONE God, the Father, of whom are all things." "ONE God and Father, who is above all." "For there is ONE God." "To the ONLY wise God be glory now and ever." "From all which," adds William Penn, "I shall lay down this one assertion; that the testimonies of Scripture, both under the law and since the gospel dispensation, declare ONE to be God, and God to be ONE, on which I shall raise this argument.

"If God, as the Scriptures testify, hath never been

declared or believed but as the holy ONE, then it will follow that God is not an holy THREE, nor doth subsist in THREE distinct and separate holy ONES : but the before-cited Scriptures undeniably prove that ONE is God, and God only is that holy ONE ; therefore he cannot be divided into, or subsist in an holy THREE, or THREE distinct and separate holy ONES."

I also read the following passage under that division of Penn's argument, wherein he professes the same doctrine to be "refuted by right reason."

"If each person be God, and that God subsists in three persons, then in each person are three persons or Gods, and from three they will increase to nine, and so *ad infinitum*."

On what Penn calls "the vulgar doctrine, of satisfaction being dependent on the second person of the Trinity," viz. "Jesus Christ," I read the following passage, in which he sets forth a part of "the absurdities that unavoidably follow the comparison of this doctrine with the sense of Scripture."—Viz.

"1. That God is gracious to forgive, and yet it is impossible for him, unless the debt be fully satisfied.

2. "That the finite and impotent *creature* is more capable of extending mercy and forgiveness, than the infinite and omnipotent *Creator*."

I called upon the committee, after reading this passage, to consider of whom William Penn spoke in those terms. To which I obtained, no reply : at which I was not surprised ; for the passage describes Jesus Christ as a "*finite and impotent creature* ;" that is, a being who could do nothing of himself, and his God and Father as *the infinite and omnipotent Creator*, who is essentially merciful *in himself*, and gracious to forgive, *without being rendered placable by another*.

Wishing to know on what grounds the charges against me were ultimately to rest, I addressed to the committee the following note, and the annexed queries.

*Wm Penn's comparison there was for
between God and man - the finite*

“ With regard to that part of the accusation which relates to my being a member of the London Unitarian Book Society, I should be obliged to the committee of the Monthly Meeting to inform me,

1st. The specific nature of your objections to my continuing a member of this Book Society?

2ndly. How far they relate to the insertion of my name in the list of its members annually published?

3rdly. In what degree those objections apply to my selecting from the annual catalogue of its publications, such books as I either wish to possess, or to give away?

4thly. What rule of the Society of Friends in which I have been educated, or what precept of the gospel, have I, in your judgment, violated, by the above, or any other part of my conduct, as a member of this Book Society?

(Signed)

THOMAS FOSTER.”

Bromley, Jan. 16th, 1812.

I yet remain without any definite answer to these queries, and am therefore still ignorant in what my offence is supposed to consist.

The next visit the committee paid me was on the 22nd of last month, when they brought with them five papers in *M.S.* containing their answers to such of the foregoing queries, as they thought fit to reply to, which they left with me for my consideration. On the first of these papers being read, I objected to the irrelevant matter it contained, and refused to countenance such a departure from good order, and the established rules of the discipline.

I also remonstrated with them on the unjust and uncandid manner, in which some other parts of their written charges were drawn up. They declined making any alteration in them. Neither could I obtain any definite solution of the question they held out some expectation of favouring me with, at this

conference. Whether, by the doctrine of our Society, divinity was attributed to the man Christ Jesus, or to that Divine power, which dwelt in, and acted by him? That it should not be ascribed to the "*outward body*," they granted, and were for putting that construction on their admission at our last conference, till I reminded them that I had put the query, and in putting it, had used the scriptural terms "*the man Christ Jesus*."

Previous to this conference, I drew up the following queries, that I might, in the language of Barclay, induce the committee, if possible, to take one side, or other of the principal question on which they appeared to think I held erroneous sentiments.

1st. Do you consider the Lord Jesus Christ as now "*glorified in the heavens in soul and body*," as being "*a true and real man*," or, that he is in reality, in this glorified state, *the supreme God*?

On reading this query, Henry Knight observed, that he considered it very unbecoming for such poor finite creatures as we were, to presume to form a judgment upon subjects so far above our comprehension. For his part he could not pretend to give an answer to such a question. In this judgment the rest of the committee appeared to concur. I then read the next query.

2ndly. If you say the former, on what grounds do you accuse me with having "*imbibed*" unscriptural "*opinions*" with regard to the person and character of Christ?"

3rdly. If you say the latter, how can you defend the position *on scriptural ground*?

To neither of these queries could I obtain any definite answer; but the committee appeared evidently to lean towards the latter, and expressed their dissatisfaction with my having presumptuously meddled with such subjects. On which I observed that I had only one more query to submit to them at present, which was this.

4thly. How can you reconcile such "position" with the last paragraph of the 13th Sec. of the 5th and 6th Prop. of Barclay's Apology? viz.

"Now, as the soul of man dwells otherwise, and in a far more immediate manner, in the head and in the heart, than in the hands or legs, and as the sap, virtue and life of the vine lodgeth otherwise in the stock and root than in the branches, so God dwelleth otherwise in the man Jesus than in us. We also freely reject the heresy of Apollinarius, who denied him to have any soul, but said the body was only actuated by the godhead. As also the error of Eutyches, who made the manhood to be wholly swallowed up of the godhead.

"Wherefore," continues Barclay, speaking in the name and on behalf of the Society, "*as we believe he was a true and real man, so we also believe that he continues so to be glorified in the heavens in soul and body, by whom God shall judge the world in the great and general day of judgment.*"

Having read the foregoing passage from Barclay's Apology to the committee, and asserted the scriptural soundness of the doctrines it contained, which I told them I had not taken up now, merely in my own defence in reply to their charges, but that I could prove, if need were, my accordance with these Christian doctrines many years ago.

Instead of their being as they had represented, on reading the queries I submitted to them, not fit for Christians to pry into, they were such as it behoved all Christians that believed the New Testament to be a true record, to be well acquainted with, and to have their truth and importance deeply impressed on their minds.

I appealed to them whether, if had I not shewn undeniably those doctrines to be Barclay's, and they had still supposed them to be my professed sentiments, unsupported by his authority, they would not have considered them as forming one

of the very strongest charges they had to allege against me?

None of the committee attempted any reply; but one of them took a copy of the four queries.

At the next conference on the 7th inst. I requested to be informed what answers the committee had brought to those queries. To which they replied, they did not think themselves at liberty to go into any discussion of that subject, *or to give me their sentiments upon it.* I answered, unless you do, I cannot understand how you can possibly take into consideration the matters referred to you as a committee. Are not those queries strictly relevant to one of the written charges you delivered to me at our last conference?

The committee said they had concluded not to go into those matters of controversy. *They had nothing to do with Barclay's opinions on such subjects, but with mine, which were well known to be contrary to those of Friends in general.*

It was in vain that I urged the futility of this plea, and the injustice of the general reflections combined with it, which I observed they had before resorted to when they felt themselves pinched at our last conference, on my shewing incontrovertibly the entire consonance of Barclay's sentiments, and mine upon this, the principal ground of their accusations against me. Samuel Marsh, however, denied that they did feel themselves pinched by the argument I alluded to. I replied, it appeared to me too evident to be called in question.

Before I conclude, I would add a few words to evince the strict accordance of scripture doctrine with that tenet of Barclay's, for holding which I have been so much censured. How consonant is it with the doctrine of the sacred writers, when they represent "*the heavenly man Christ,*" in his glorified state, as sitting "*on the right hand of God.*"

Col. iii. 1. conformably to the prediction of Christ himself, recorded by Luke xxii. 69, in these words: "Hereafter shall *the Son of Man* sit on the right hand of *the power of God*." And by the Evangelists, Mat. xxvi. 44. and Mark xiv. 62. to the like import. The apostle Paul also, Eph. i. 17. 19. 20. most plainly ascribes the resurrection and exaltation of Christ to "the GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the FATHER OF GLORY*,—according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ *when he raised him from the dead*, and set him at *his own right hand* in the heavenly places."

As to the committee declining to express their mind on the subject, I beg it may be distinctly understood, *I present no charge against them*. If they are in doubt upon it, I would recommend them to inquire farther, and by no means to profess either that, or any other doctrine, merely because it was held by Barclay, or for any other reason than their own conviction of its truth.

It was an apostolic injunction, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:—*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin*." Rom. xiv. 5. 23. That is, to profess even true doctrines, without conviction, is no better than to hold the truth in unrighteousness.

I wave noticing the subsequent part of the conferences with the committee in this address as unnecessary; my minutes will enable me readily to recur to any part, to which you, or the committee may wish to refer. I am, with good will towards you all, your sincere friend,

Bromley,
Feb. 19th, 1812.

THOMAS FOSTER.

I had not got through the introductory observations of this address, before I was interrupted by Wil-

liam Batger, who asserted they were little or nothing to the purpose. I reminded him I had not retained him as my counsel, and whatever he might think of what I had read, I hoped he would not pretend to judge of the pertinency of what I had not, till he heard it.

After some other observations had been made, I was again suffered to proceed, till I came to that part which very briefly reviews the conduct of the overseers. The impropriety of my presuming to judge of that, was strenuously insisted on: when I inquired if I was to understand that persons under such an appointment were infallible; if they were not, they might err, and, as a person accused by them and by the committee, I had a right to notice such parts of their conduct towards me as I thought were not conformable to gospel order, and the rules of the discipline. The committee had, in my judgment deviated widely from both, and when the Meeting had heard my reasons for thinking so, they might judge between us.

Being allowed to proceed, till my letter to the overseers, dated Nov. 5th, was mentioned, with a proposal to have it read; I requested they would produce it for that purpose. They replied it had been left at home. On which I informed the Meeting I had a copy of it, which I was about to read, when the opposition to my so doing became so general, that I assented to wave reading it for the present.

Only one Friend, Charles Palmer, expressed a word in favour of my being allowed to read it, or to have the liberty I claimed soon after, to read my shorter letter to them, dated Nov. 17th. He then reminded the Meeting of the regret he had expressed when the case was first reported, that the overseers did not pay me another visit after the receipt of my letter. Several of the committee objected to its being read,

and Richard Bowman alleged that although they had received it, as I said, more than a month, I was from home more than three weeks of the time. Yet the fact is, I was not absent quite two weeks, and saw them, as I observed, several times after my return at Meeting, and thought their taking no notice of my letter very strange.

The accuracy of my statement of what Samuel Marsh said, respecting his being apprised that I was to be accused, was not denied; but one person observed, he thought I should not have mentioned the Friend's name; I might have said one of the committee. I replied, it appeared to me better as it was; the Meeting generally knew I had not imputed it to a wrong person.

On reading that part which speaks of the two distinct charges alleged against me by the overseers, 12th month, 19th last, I remarked how disingenuous it was of the committee to endeavour to conceal in their report, which lay on the table, that the Society, to which I was a subscriber, was a mere Book Society. The discussion that had taken place between us on that point, ought to have satisfied them of the injustice of such an artifice.

Richard Bowman alleged that it was called "*the Unitarian Society*," in the title to the Book of Rules, a copy of which he produced, and read therefrom those words, *and those only*; whereas, had he gone on with the sentence, the purposes of the institution would have appeared in the following words:—"Rules, &c. of the Unitarian Society, for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, by distributing such books as appear to the members of the Society to contain the most rational views of the gospel, and to be most free from the errors by which it has long been sullied and obscured."

When I came to the first set of queries which I had submitted to the committee, in order to induce

them to explain the indefinite minute of their appointment, as to the accusations against me; the impropriety of my entering into such details was endeavoured to be shewn, by alleging the uselessness of appointing a committee, if the particulars which they had taken into consideration, were to be opened in the Meeting, and such an attempt was pronounced to be irregular, and disorderly.

I told the Meeting if they would permit me to proceed in reading those queries, they might judge how far they were relevant to the charges against me, and whether I was not entitled to put them, although I had not yet been furnished with a clear, distinct answer to one of them.

Being suffered to proceed without farther interruption, till I came to that part which states the inquisitorial claims the committee had set up, I could not help pausing, to observe the full confirmation the report laying on the table furnished of the truth of the part I had just read, both with regard to their conduct and mine.

I also remarked how unjust it was for the committee to include charges against me in their report, which were not referred to in the minute of their appointment, and which I refused to enter upon on that account, and had not therefore been at all heard thereon in my own defence, as they knew.

When I came to the reference to the passages I had read to the committee from Penn's Sandy Foundation Shaken, [inserted p. 68, 69.] I told the Meeting I regretted not having transcribed them, as they were sound, scriptural, and highly important.

On reading my account of the committee's refusal to say whether they were satisfied with the explanation I had given them a week before, when I thought we were agreed in what sense only our Society ascribed divinity to Christ, they made no objection to the fact being as I stated.

To my statement of what passed between the committee and myself, relative to that greatly important passage in Barclay, Prop. 5 and 6, § 13. not one of them made the least objection. Nor did they to the correctness of my minutes of the conference between us, respecting the five queries relative to the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810. [p. 65, 66.]

When I had finished reading my written address to the Meeting, several friends urged, that as I had now laid before them all I had to say, they hoped I should be willing to leave them to their own free deliberation, that they might consider the report of their committee.

I replied, that I had by no means said all I had to say. There were in my mind other matters which it behoved me to lay before them at a proper time, relative to the two last visits I had received, exclusive of the committee's report, which I felt did me great injustice. But although I could not concede the right of the Meeting to exclude a person situated as I was, during the discussion in a Monthly Meeting of his own case, if the Meeting would signify that I should be furnished with a copy of the committee's report, provided they received it, and of any minute they might make thereon, I believed I should voluntarily withdraw before the close of the Meeting, as I wanted to go home.

Richard Bowman observed that I had no reason to suppose, from the conduct of the committee towards me, that I should have any difficulty in procuring a copy of the minute. I made no reply to this strange observation; but I might have remarked that he must surely have forgotten the great reluctance the committee had manifested to giving me a copy of the minute of their appointment!

The report of the committee being at length agreed to, and with the introductory minute again read, I

rose and left the Meeting, thankful, that I had so far borne my testimony faithfully, against such a flagrant usurpation of the rights of private judgment, and in favour of pure scriptural truth.

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

19th of 3rd Month, 1812.

When the opening minute was read, I rose and observed, that as my being present at the last Meeting had been objected to, I had no wish to be present now, while any other business was transacted, than that which related to my own case. Nor even to be present during the consideration of that, farther than the principles of justice required, and the rules of the discipline allowed. But having received notice to attend, perhaps the Meeting would not object to taking up the minute respecting me in the first place.

The other minutes on the book were, however, taken up in the usual order, without any Friend requesting me to withdraw.

The report of the committee being about to be read, after the preceding minute, I submitted to the Meeting, whether it might not be proper to permit me first to read the letter I addressed to the overseers, dated Nov. 5th last, as it related to the state of the case previous to that report having been drawn up, and which I yet thought it was proper they should hear.

This being objected to, the report of the committee and the minute thereon were read. After which I read my letter to the overseers, inserted p. 14 to 21, and then the following address.

Dear Friends,

In contemplating the situation in which I am placed by a minute of the last Monthly Meeting, it was natural for me to consider the constitution of the Society in which I had been educated, and the rules that have been established for the government of its members. In doing this, under such a notification as I have received from you, how could I avoid reflecting, that the Society had never yet thought fit to establish a creed, or to enjoin upon its members any formal confession of articles of faith. This was to act so far upon the model of the primitive Christian church, in which the New Testament abundantly testifies the belief of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth was the only article of faith enjoined on Jewish converts, as the terms of religious communion, they already holding that great fundamental of all true religion, the Being and Providence of God.

Of heathen converts a relinquishment of Polytheism, under every form, was also required, as well as an acknowledgment of the divine mission of Christ the Son of God. The imposition of creeds and confessions of faith, under the vain pretence of avoiding diversity of opinion, concerning the doctrines of religion, was the work of priestcraft in subsequent ages of the church. They have however one advantage over the system upon which you have acted in this instance; that those who are required to subscribe or profess them have due notice thereof.

Whereas, upon the principles on which the proceedings against me have been conducted, an inquisition may be established in every Monthly Meeting without referring to any known rule, or prescribed formulary of faith. There is no member of the Society, who may not be liable to its insidious enquiries into the soundness of his faith, respecting any point

on which one or two persons, in the station of overseers, may chuse to examine him, at the instigation of others. These prompters may also be members of other meetings, unknown to the party accused, as the overseers cannot deny was the case in the present instance. What such persons have said to the overseers respecting me, I know not, as they have refused to inform me.

But it is not improbable from what they did say, respecting the manner in which it had been pressed upon them by these zealous disciplinarians, and from their subsequent conduct, that they were mere agents employed by others, and that expulsion, not candid dispassionate enquiry, was the end proposed and acted upon from the commencement.

The probable consequences of your sanctioning such a precedent in the administration of the discipline, is well deserving your serious consideration. If the principles upon which it is founded will bear examination, and are in unison with gospel order, they ought to be generally acted upon. But if they are utterly opposed to the mild, benignant, and candid spirit of Christianity, you had better even yet pause before you proceed farther.

My address to you at the last Meeting related principally to the manner in which your committee acted towards me, in violation, as I conceive, of the established rules of the discipline, of gospel order, and of the immutable principles of reason and justice. In this I propose entering more closely into the matters alleged against me, that my supposed offences may be better understood by you, than they can possibly be, by the committee's report.

Their conduct has been very similar throughout, being governed by the like intolerant maxims. They also pertinaciously refused to define the meaning of the principal terms in their written charges against me. Yet it appears to me they used those terms, in

a very unusual sense, and therefore I cannot imagine it was unreasonable to request such an explanation of their charges, as would enable me to understand them.

Nor have you to my knowledge expressed any judgment respecting my said request, which I informed you of at the last Meeting. Am I to understand by your silence that you deem it improper for an accused person to know what the charges against him are? That I do not even yet, is certain.

A copy of the committee's report was delivered to me on Feb. 23d, by your clerk, with the minute made thereon *after I had left the Meeting*. What were the circumstances under which this report was received, and this minute agreed to? The party accused informed you he had much more to offer in his defence; and although he could readily perceive that the report did him great injustice, he should not even attempt at present any particular reply to the charges it contained, as they required deliberate consideration, which he might bestow upon them on receiving a copy of the report.

This exposition of the committee's feelings and judgment in the first place informs us, that they found "no satisfaction" in their two last visits. This is, I think, easily accounted for. At the first of these visits I read to them my observations on the written papers they put into my hands at the preceding conference. Those being in *M.S.* will, like the papers to which they refer, always speak the same language. And, as I told the committee, I am quite willing the matters then at issue between us, should be judged of by those documents, by the persons whose province it might become to decide between us.

Those papers you have not seen, and the judgment you have so far exercised has been under a formal complaint of one of the parties concerned,

that he has not been fairly or fully heard. It has been far from my wish to give you or the committee needless trouble. Had they confined themselves to the charges alleged against me, and explained the terms they used so as to enable me to understand them, I was as much disposed to a friendly, open discussion of those matters as during the visits the overseers paid me, which they fully acknowledged to you. The different character of the visits of your committee was sincerely regretted by me; but it arose from their repeated efforts from an early part of their first visit to question me upon matters foreign to the accusation presented to the Meeting against me by the overseers.

The charges now recognized are to be looked for in the committee's report, which your minute says you have "*solidly considered.*" And it appears that you soon came to a "*judgment.*" What was this? Not to give me the previous hearing I had so recently claimed as the common right of every accused person, but to pass judgment before I had been fully heard, and to "testify" your "*disunity*" with such principles and conduct as this report imputes to me. I shall now examine on what grounds, as a duty to the full as "*incumbent*" upon me, as that of pronouncing "*judgment*" on such imperfect and partial evidence could possibly be upon you.

It was to act upon the same principles you had avowed while I was present, and I therefore left you under a strong presentiment of the general complexion of what was to follow. The proposal which was made for me to leave the Meeting till you had concluded whether to receive the report or not, and afterwards to be called in to be informed the result, and to be heard in my own defence, appearing to be generally approved, was too plain to be misunderstood. It was therefore no surprise to me to find that you so promptly desired "the Friends before appointed to

draw up a testimony of denial" on the frivolous and indefensible grounds alleged in "*the said report.*"

The leading feature of the labours of your committee is very naturally expressed in their report in these terms.—"*We questioned him* on some important points of doctrine, respecting which we had strong ground *to believe* his opinions are at variance with those of the Society, to which he decidedly *refused to answer.*"

That they questioned me, as they say, is true. And it is also true that it was for the most part on points which had no relation to the charges alleged against me. They state my refusal to answer those questions, but without mentioning the reasons I assigned for such refusal, which were, that no rule of the Yearly Meeting warranted the exercise of such inquisitorial powers, and that most of their questions had no relation to the subjects referred to their care.

But if they had: let me entreat you calmly to consider, whether an assertion of two, three, or four individuals, that they have "strong ground *to believe*" that the "*opinions*" of another person "are at variance with those of the Society" constitutes proper evidence of the fact. It amounts on the face of the record, not to any proof, but to belief only. Let those grounds, which the committee deem so strong, be brought forth, and then others may judge of their validity. As the party accused, I object to the strength of their persuasions as any evidence of the fact they would have you deduce from it. It may only shew their inclinations that way. They are fallible men, and may therefore form a wrong judgment respecting the "*opinions*" of a person, whose general reading and pursuits may be widely different from theirs.

The reiterated efforts they made to put ensnaring questions to me admonished me to be aware of such insidious attempts, and determined me not to

reply to them, lest I should contribute to the establishment of a pernicious precedent. Their report says, "he was also asked if he were not the author who *assumes* the name of Verax; *which he also refused to answer.*" The question put to me on this subject, which is now stated for evident, but not very justifiable reasons, *in the present tense*, was then said to refer to a pamphlet, entitled "A Vindication of Scriptural Unitarianism," &c. published in 1803. Who is there that now assumes the name of Verax? And what do the committee mean to insinuate by talking of an author who "assumes" that name, instead of saying who published such a tract or tracts under the signature of Verax? Do they mean to convey an idea of its being a false assumption? If they do, it is a mean, disingenuous artifice, unworthy any real lover of truth and justice.

Now for the evidence whereon the committee have called upon you to rely, that I am "the author who assumes the name of Verax." They say, "which he is publicly *charged with in print.*" Indeed! Is all then that appears *in print* therefore worthy of credit? I should think not. But they say I was "publicly *charged*" *with this offence.* Why did they use such terms on this occasion? Had they been inclined to state the fact here alluded to, truly, fairly, and candidly, they should rather have said *commended for it*, than have used a term so much at variance with the tenor of the public notice of which they speak. It is little better than wilfully perverting the evidence of others, and in my mind wholly indefensible. [See the Monthly Review for Dec. 1810, p. 442.]

The committee are correct in saying I refused to inform them whether I was the author of that pamphlet. But they know I professed my readiness to meet any charge they could bring against me, when the same was brought forward in a regular, orderly

manner. Nor did they point out a single passage in it as exceptionable, or in Verax's more recent work, entitled a Defence of Christian Unitarianism, published in 1808.

General accusations are essentially unjust, yet such have your committee mostly *dealt in*; and in their next accusation of Verax they say, "the *apparent scope* of whose publications is, to prove that our early Friends denied *the eternal divinity of Christ.*" I very much doubt whether they have read the publications whose general scope they have thus described. They seem rather to have pinned their faith on the groundless notion of Vindex, which is expressed in the first page of the Introduction to his "Examination of the First Part of an Appeal to the Society of Friends." However this may be, if the committee have looked through those works, to shew that it cannot have been with much attention, I will transcribe one passage from the Introduction to the Reply to Vindex, published in 1803, which they seem not to have noticed. Let Verax speak for himself. He says,

"That I consider our early Friends to have been generally Unitarians I readily admit; and notwithstanding there is considerable ambiguity in their writings, the scale of evidence has always appeared to me to preponderate decidedly in favour of that opinion. They were no doubt, as even Vindex allows William Penn to have been, at all times '*deeply impressed with the importance of holding up the doctrine of the complete unity of the Deity.*' The consistent acknowledgment and reverent belief of this truly scriptural and primitive doctrine *is pure and simple Unitarianism.* It is in this sense only I have used the phrase, as descriptive of the sentiments of our early Friends.

"That they denied 'the eternal divinity of Christ,' in the sense in which they used those terms, I am

so far from having asserted, that I have given some of the strongest of their expressions in favour of that doctrine. But, as with the voice of one man, they united in rejecting *all distinction of personality in the Deity*, if they affixed any definite or consistent idea to the terms they used on this subject, it must surely have been their intention to ascribe *supreme divinity to God the Father only, the uncreated cause of all things.* p. 4, 5."

Of this passage I shall only observe, that it very ill accords with the judgment of the committee concerning the "scope" of Verax's publications. Nor do I know any other that will warrant their assertion. They should either have quoted, or referred to some specific passages in support of it, or have abstained from bringing such a charge, even had the matter of it been previously gone into, which they know it never was.

To proceed to the charges they were appointed to investigate. As to these, they are so far from complaining of my having "*refused to answer.*" that they describe my conduct in the following terms:—"But he *avows* that he has *distributed* some papers, entitled "*Remarks on the Quaker's Yearly Epistle*"; also that he is a member of the Unitarian Society, in which *he confesses he has great satisfaction.*"

I would first notice that my admission concerning the "*Remarks*" was not expressed in terms of such extensive import, as the committee use, and it was accompanied with an avowal, that I had also given to some of my acquaintance, a Reply to the Remarks by Breviloquus, a copy of which I shewed them, saying, I was quite as willing it should be read and judged of by others, as the Remarks. I likewise told them that another Reply had been sent me, written by an Elder, which I was desirous should be published, and at first thought it was sent me for that purpose; but the writer's name being

affixed to it, I did not *then think myself justified* in sending it to the editor of any periodical work for insertion, without his consent. How extensively it has been circulated in *M.S.* in connection with these proceedings, (in which the writer secretly bore his part) I cannot say, but at the first visit the overseers paid me, I found reason to suppose they had seen it; and soon after Henry Knight shewed me a copy, the date, the writer's name and residence excepted, evidently intended for circulation. Had I received it in this state, I might perhaps have sent it for insertion in the *Monthly Repository*. [See p. 25—27 for a copy of this reply.]

These circumstances, as well as the general tenor of the Remarks, are, I conceive, sufficient to evince, to every liberal and enlightened mind, that I was not actuated by any evil design towards the Society, or the cause of scriptural truth, by any publicity I have given those papers. My real object was to serve both. Had any able reply to the second paper, by an Unitarian Christian, or to *Pacificus*, or *Candidus*, on the same subject, appeared, I should have been as ready to promote their circulation, as I ever was that of the Remarks.

Such proceedings as these against me, are not calculated to confute arguments of any kind. *Breviloquus* judged much better, when he took up his pen in reply to an Unitarian Christian. I am aware that circumstances, which I much lament, may have prevented his continuing the discussion; yet I have by far too favourable an opinion of him, as a man and a Christian, to imagine he could view with complacency, such attempts to support his theological sentiments. Whether he writes under the signature of *Vindex*, *Breviloquus*, *Altera Pars*, or any other fictitious name, his style, as an author, is too well known to be readily mistaken. And he must know that such men as Penn, Barclay, Fox and

Penington, would have disclaimed all such means of upholding their doctrines.

On hearing the report of the committee read at the last Monthly Meeting, I observed, how very uncandid and unjust it was of them, to endeavour to conceal from the Meeting, by the omission of the word *Book* between the words *Unitarian* and *Society*, that their last accusation related merely to my being a subscriber to a *Book Society*. Yet they knew that to be the case, and had acknowledged to me that they also knew its subscribers to be members of various religious societies. In reply, Richard Bowman informed the Meeting, it was called "*the Unitarian Society*," in the title to the Book of Rules. One of which he produced, and read therefrom those three words, *and those only!*

Whereas the title is verbatim thus—"Rules, &c. of the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, *by distributing such Books*, as appear to the members of the Society to contain the most rational views of the gospel, and to be most free from the errors by which it has long been sullied and obscured." Can any thing be more disingenuous than such an attempt to deceive? And especially after my previous remonstrances with the committee, on the disposition they had before shewn to practise so gross an act of injustice, calculated to represent me as having joined myself to another religious society.

Speaking of my connection with the London Unitarian Book Society, your committee say, "in which he confesses *he has great satisfaction*." They do not seem at all suitably impressed with the obligation of stating accurately the confessions of others, when they undertake that difficult task. The confession to which they allude, I well remember, and they must know it related solely to my being a subscriber to a *Book Society*. And the satisfaction I

spoke of, was said to have arisen from the perusal of many excellent works, with which I might not have been otherwise acquainted. It was also expressed in the past tense, yet they assert it of *the present*.

When I became a subscriber to this Book Society, in the year 1804, I considered its fundamental principles as scriptural truths of the highest importance, and perfectly accordant to the principles of our Society, as opposed to the doctrine of "*the Trinity of distinct and separate persons in the Unity of essence.*" My ideas accord with those of William Penn, "*that GOD is not an holy THREE, nor doth subsist in THREE distinct and separate holy ones.*" But that the "scriptures undeniably prove that ONE is God, and GOD *only* is that *holy ONE.*" Works, vol. i. p. 253.

As to the endeavours of the committee to convince me of the impropriety of my conduct "*as a member of our Society,*" I do not know any efforts of theirs at all adapted to this object. They told me, it is true, they thought my conduct was inconsistent, but did not condescend to assign their reasons for the opinion they pronounced. In short they appeared to think I ought, both with regard to doctrines and conduct, implicitly to submit to their judgment, without knowing whereon that was founded, and without any explanation of the terms they used. More than once they observed that I might enjoy the privilege of my own thoughts, if I would but keep them to myself. That, I replied, was equivalent to saying, if I would but add hypocrisy to the other errors I had fallen into, I might pass without censure, and still be considered as in unity with the church. But I did not think myself much obliged to them for the privilege they professed to be willing to grant me, as it was one, of which the most consummate of earthly tyrants could not deprive a prisoner whom he confined in a dungeon.

Before I proceed to consider the theological errors your committee "*believe*" *I hold*, for their report contains no direct or specific charge of that kind, I would lay before you some written accusations which they delivered to me Jan. 22nd last.

These charges were—1st. "The Friends who have visited thee before, charge thee with holding that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent, nor the proper object of adoration and praise." In order to point out in what manner the committee charged me with having censurably propagated the opinions I had imbibed, they say,

2nd. "By spreading an anonymous paper, and publishing a book or books tending to invalidate the faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as held by the Society, and set forth in Sewel's History, (vol. ii. p. 497—500,) and in other works as above quoted (viz. 'Summary' and 'Yearly Meeting Epistles various Extracts,') and *by joining thyself to a Society* who think it their duty to avow their belief that '*Jesus Christ the most distinguished of the prophets is the creature and messenger of God, and not his equal nor his vicegerent in the formation and government of the world, nor co-partner with him in divine honours.*' "

On the above accusations being read, after objecting to the former part, as irrelevant, I appealed to the committee, whether it was just or candid to select that part only of the Preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society, when I had pointed out to the overseers that it was undeniably clear, from the tenor of the whole, that it was *the man Christ Jesus*, mentioned above, that was there spoken of, and not that divine power which dwelt in him. [See p. 46, 47.]

Did not they, when speaking of Jesus Christ as having been crucified, or as having died, assert it only of *the man Christ Jesus*? In what other sense,

I wished them to inform me, did the evangelists speak of Christ when he was said to have *increased in wisdom* and in stature, and in favour with God and man, to be weary with his journey, to be hungry, faint, &c.? Could those things be affirmed with truth of the great and OMNIPOTENT CREATOR? On many other occasions, when Christ was spoken of by the sacred writers, the man Christ Jesus only could be meant.

The committee alleged that they had a right to select such part of the preface as they chose, to ground their accusation upon. Although, I replied, the meaning of the part you have chosen, depends upon, and is explained by what goes before? To which they declaring their assent! I told them it could only be, on the same mode of reasoning, by which a person professed to be able to prove from the Bible, that "there is no God," whereas the text says, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." This was an impious attempt, with which I do not charge you, but I must say the reasoning you have adopted, on this and other occasions, is equally inconclusive and unjust.

At this conference the committee gave me a paper, intended to explain in what sense they understood that the Society of Friends ascribed divinity to Christ, that is, whether to the man Christ Jesus, or to that Divine power which dwelt in him. It is verbatim as follows—

"We here mean," say your committee, "the *spiritual body of Christ*, which, he told the Jews, except they partook of, they had no life in them, the spiritual rock which the fathers are described to have drank of, that powerful efficient word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God, by which all things were created, which took flesh and dwelt among mankind, which wrought many miracles on earth, was accused by the Jews, whose *outward body*

suffered death under Pontius Pilate, but was raised up again the third day, which ascended up far above all heavens, filling all things, and upholding all things by the word of his power, and having by one offering perfected for ever all those who are, or shall be sanctified, through obedience to the Holy Spirit, through or by which he appeareth the second time without sin unto salvation."

To say nothing of the palpable perversion of the sense of the sacred writers which the above document contains, as a reference to the texts they have so strangely garbled, will evince, I appeal to you, whether it is not evident the committee could not have meant to designate "the man Christ Jesus," by any of the terms they have used, excepting the epithet so emphatically dashed under, viz. "*outward body?*" And if so, however they may, for reasons best known to themselves, chuse to shroud their sentiments in a misapplication of the figurative language of scripture, whether it can be justly inferred, from this paper, given me as the result of their mature and united judgment, that they ascribe any other divinity to "*the heavenly man Christ,*" than that of the Father which dwelt in him? As it still does in his glorified state in the heavens, by whom, that is, by that man whom he hath ordained, God shall judge the world in the last and general day of judgment.

Not being able to induce the committee to say, whether they accorded with, or rejected the above doctrine concerning Christ, as stated by Barclay, and in the New Testament, I proposed to them the following queries in writing,

1st. Do you consider omnipotence as a communicable attribute? Or, as an essential inseparable attribute of *the most high God?*

2ndly. When you speak of Jesus Christ as omnipotent, do you mean *the man Christ Jesus?*

3rdly. When you describe Jesus Christ as "*the proper object of adoration and praise,*" do you mean "*the man Christ Jesus?*" And by the terms "*adoration and praise,*" do you mean *supreme religious worship?*

To these I subjoined the following note,

"When you have favoured me with distinct and clear answers to these plain questions, arising out of the terms in which your first written accusation is drawn up, I will take them into deliberate consideration, and give you my reply to the same.

"THOMAS FOSTER.

"*Bromley, Feb. 7th, 1812.*"

To this note I annexed the following postscript :

"In further explanation of your sentiments on the subject of the foregoing accusation, I wish to be informed,"

1st. Whether it is not undeniably the doctrine of Barclay, and of the scriptures, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as now glorified in the heavens, is, in soul and body, *a true and real man, by whom God shall judge the world?*

2ndly. Whether you deem it sound and scriptural, to ascribe omnipotence to *any true and real man, however exalted or glorified?*

3rdly. Whether any true and real man can be, consistently with the doctrine of the scriptures, represented as '*the proper object*' of *supreme adoration and praise.*

4thly. Whether the scriptures do not uniformly ascribe omnipotence to *that great Being only*, who is therein styled the GOD and FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ, and represent HIM ALONE as *the proper object of supreme religious worship?*

To none of these queries have I yet received from the committee any verbal or written reply, perti-

in manner in which the author treated the Committee, and endeavoured to brow beat them, and Mr. Whiting, &c. impose self conceited haughty upon them,

ment as they all are to their accusation. Is such treatment at all likely to convince me of any errors I may have imbibed, or to enable the committee to ascertain what my errors are, and to judge of their nature and extent? Are these the endeavours they speak of, in their report to you, as having bestowed upon me? That such has been their conduct they cannot deny. Thus refusing me all explanation, they proceeded to accuse me before you, in equally vague and ambiguous terms. Is it possible this can be justifiable?

It is utterly inconsistent with my ideas of equity and justice, of fair dealing, and strait forward, honourable conduct. I may add, if such treatment of an accused person be sanctioned by any human tribunal, I must appeal against its injustice, and shall be ready to exclaim in the strong language of the patriarch, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honour, be not thou united."

I would gladly hope better things of you, provided you will even yet give me a dispassionate hearing, and divest your minds of prejudice, unfavourable as the situation in which I now stand is to an ultimate impartial decision, seeing judgment has been already pronounced. This consideration shall not, however, discourage me from persevering in my defence, being fully persuaded your committee had no just ground for their accusations; or rather, as I hinted before, their insinuations against me in their report. They are merely inferences of their own, from the admitted fact of my having given away some of the papers, entitled "Remarks on the Quaker's Yearly Epistle."

The committee describe me in their report as "*calling in question* the omnipotence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the propriety of applying to him in secret supplication, *as professed by*

the Yearly Meeting in its Epistle for 1810." Am I therefore an offender? And is this the evidence whereon I am accused on your records with having imbibed some opinions contrary to the principles of the Society?

The committee might have accused me on much better ground than they have chosen. My letter to the overseers, dated Nov. 17th last, assures them that I believed all that Jesus Christ is recorded in the New Testament to have said concerning himself. And he is therein recorded to have said, that "The Son can do nothing of himself.—I can of mine own self do nothing." John v. 19. 30. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Ibid. xiv. 10. If these and the like divine sayings are true, as I believe they are, surely there must be some sense in which, truly, properly and scripturally speaking, Jesus Christ is not omnipotent.

With regard to the omnipotence of God the Father, there is no question, that I know of, among professing Christians. And the committee having admitted that when they speak of the divinity of Christ, as a doctrine held by the Society, they ascribe it only to that divine power which dwelt in him and acted by him, I feel myself obliged to conclude that in speaking of the omnipotence of Christ, they also ascribe it to the same divine power of the Father, which dwelt in him, and not to the man Christ Jesus. The contrary opinion would be very inconsistent and absurd.

Divinity is a word not to be found in the received version of the Scriptures. It seems to have been derived from the heathen mythology, and by no means necessarily implies supreme, original, undervived Deity, but rather the impartation of the communicable attributes of the one true God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and especially of all truly divine graces and endowments. In this sense

of the term it may with the utmost propriety, and in the most eminent manner, be ascribed to *the man Christ Jesus* whilst he dwelt on earth, as it may also in his present exalted and glorified state in the heavens, at the right hand of *the power of God*.

The Greek word which is rendered in English *omnipotent* or *almighty*, occurs ten times in the New Testament, and is therein only applied to God, never to *Christ*. The same word is also very often used in the Old Testament, about one hundred and twenty times, and is uniformly applied to God. Would it not then be, as far as is in the power of such frail, dependent beings as we are, to deprive God of his peculiar honour and sole prerogative, to ascribe it to another?

If you should disclaim doing this, under the Sabelian notion, that the *Father* and the *Son* are *personally the same being*, I confess my ignorance of any text of Scripture that can warrant such a conclusion. You must, I think admit, that absolute, *underived Deity* and *omnipotence* are very frequently, plainly and expressly ascribed in the Scriptures to *the Father only*, and in such terms as cannot, with any shew of reason, be said to designate the Son. Of those comparatively few texts which have been otherwise understood, a considerable part are unquestionably corrupt interpolations.

How then can the inference deducible from the usual language of the sacred writers, that *the Father alone is the most high God*, be evaded with any consistency by a Society, which has always refused to admit in any sense whatever *a distinction of persons in the Deity*? A person who asserts *the supremacy of the Father*, ought to be considered by them as acknowledging the *omnipotence of the one true God*, as fully as by expressing his belief in terms much

less frequently, if at all employed by the sacred writers, *to designate the Supreme Being.*

To have stated their accusation correctly, the committee should have quoted the passage in the Remarks to which they refer. I suppose it is this. "Our great Master has repeatedly assured us that all the powers even he himself possessed *were given him of his Father,—that of himself he could do nothing.*" Can any one who seriously and sincerely believes these sayings of Christ consider him *as really omnipotent?* I cannot doubt the veracity of these positive declarations, as I informed the committee; yet they would not acknowledge *their belief in them*, or explain to me, how omnipotence can be consistently ascribed to the person, *by whom those declarations were made.*

"Yet does this Epistle," says the writer of the Remarks, "without any reference to the source whence all his powers were derived, *ascribe omnipotence to the meek and humble Jesus.*" I am uninformed why the committee did not chuse to state this part of their accusation accurately. Perhaps they thought, as they well might, that it would appear strange to accuse a person, who professed to believe all Christ's sayings, of not ascribing omnipotence *to the meek and humble Jesus.* That he made these positive declarations cannot be doubted; if any thing in the gospels may be safely relied on as unquestionable truth. Did the committee imagine that meekness, humility and lowliness of mind, which are frequently ascribed to Christ by the sacred writers, *but never to God*, were incompatible with the ascription of *omnipotence to the same Being?*

The lowly-minded Saviour, of whom this Epistle speaks, cannot, I think, with propriety, be understood to designate any other person than *the one me-*

diator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. How then can this “*all sufficient Saviour,*” as I reverently believe him to be, by *by the will and appointment of his Father*, be truly and properly said to be *omnipotent*? To assert this of Jesus Christ is, in my mind, to imply a disbelief of some of the most clear, definite and positive truths, he is, by the testimony of the evangelists, recorded to have delivered concerning himself. Am I *to be censured and disowned for believing his words*?

How far the committee meant to include that divine power, which we unitedly acknowledge to have dwelt in Christ and to have acted by him, under the ambiguous terms “Lord” and “Saviour,” which are by the sacred writers, with much propriety, ascribed not only to God, but also, in an inferior sense to the man Christ Jesus, I know not. If they do, I can only say, I never understood the writer of the Remarks did. And if so, he may have been speaking, as I believe was the fact, of *the man Christ Jesus*, and the committee may have understood him to have spoken of *that divine power* which enabled Jesus Christ to perform all his mighty works, and to speak as never man spake.

The committee seem to have fallen into a similar error, when they speak of offering “secret supplication” to Christ. They do not, I imagine, mean that it is a Christian duty to supplicate *the man Christ Jesus*, but that *divine power* which dwelt in him. Or, in plain, scriptural phrase, *the FATHER, who is greater than all.*

The proper inquiry seems to be,—To whom does omnipotence appertain? And who is, according to the sacred writers, *the God* that is *truly omniscient* and *heareth prayer*? Did not Jesus Christ enjoin it as an incumbent duty on all his followers to pray to *the FATHER* and *to him only*? Does not Christ represent it as an indispensable criterion of all true wor-

ship, not only that it should be in spirit and in truth, but also that it be offered unto the only proper object of adoration, to HIS FATHER *and* OUR FATHER, to HIS GOD *and* OUR GOD? See John iv. 23, 24. "The true worshippers," says Christ, "*shall worship the Father.*" Of whom, or of whose worship, the committee's report is wholly silent, as it is also concerning the Scriptures!

Yet, on the credit of such a document as this, have you directed them, under such circumstances as I have stated to you, to "draw up a testimony of denial," intended to exclude me from the benefits of Christian communion! The apostle Paul said, "where no law is, there is no transgression." And your committee know I have in vain called upon them to state what rule of the Society they charge me with having broken. Nor have you informed me.

Can such proceedings as these, I call upon you to say, as honest men and as Christians, be just, regular and orderly? Are they accordant with the genuine sense and spirit of our discipline, which assumes *the sacred name of Christian*? If they are, I have hitherto entertained such different ideas of the proper objects of Christian discipline, and of the temper of mind in which it ought to be administered, that if this be the real state of the case, not as it concerns me personally, for that is a very inferior consideration in my estimation, but as it concerns the system acted upon by a professed Christian church, I wish distinctly to state, *that I have nothing to complain of* on being excluded from a Society, *in which such principles are systematically acted upon.*

What is it I shall lose by being disowned? The right of attending meetings for discipline, of which I am almost weary, and of using the library and inspecting the records of the Society, which I am aware contain much curious and some interesting matter, illustrative of the genuine maxims and spirit

which prevailed at different periods of its history. Of those also, I have seen nearly enough to satiate my curiosity, so that my personal privations would not be great, in consequence of such a decision.

But as I have taken much pains to acquire just ideas of the genuine doctrines of the Society, and to appreciate the spirit and manner in which its discipline is directed to be put in practice, I cannot allow that its rules afford any sanction to such irregular and intolerant proceedings. There are, in the Book of Extracts, seventeen rules of the Society, applicable to as many cases, and all of them authorizing disownment. Of these, six are for transgressions of the moral law. Four relate to such cases as are immoral, or otherwise, according to circumstances. Six relate to proceedings in courts of law, to marriages contrary to the rules, to the payment of tythes, and other ecclesiastical demands. And one only, to points of faith. Nor is this at all applicable to my case, although the overseers once thought of proceeding "*in part*" upon it.

Is it then to be believed that the Yearly Meeting, by whom these special and definite rules were made, for the government of inferior Meetings, could have intended that each of those Meetings, or any of them, should exercise all the powers of legislative authority, and apply them, without controul, to cases never contemplated by the Yearly Meeting, as the proper objects of such disciplinary proceedings? The assumption of such powers, by any Monthly Meeting, is in effect to invade the proper province of the Yearly Meeting, and to render its rules of no kind of importance.

Do you mean, by setting up such pretensions, to say, that the Yearly Meeting has not sufficiently provided for all cases that may require disownment? If you do, let the defect, if there be one on this side the question, be pointed out, and a remedy applied

to it in a constitutional manner. But do not violate those essential principles of justice, on the preservation of which, the peace and welfare of every well-regulated community depends, for the sake of expelling a person from membership, by measures not sanctioned by your own rules.

Those which authorise disownment, apply in the first place to certain specific transgressions of the moral law, and generally to all such persons "as walk disorderly." These are sufficiently extensive in their operation. And those relating to going to law, to marriages contrary to the rules, to tythes, &c. are as express and effectual as any one could wish; as are those respecting the non-payment of just debts, being concerned in Letters of Marque, making implements of war, &c. The only one which relates to matters of faith, was issued in 1694, and is drawn up in so benevolent a spirit, and so much in the genuine simplicity of the primitive Christian faith, that I cannot well avoid pressing it earnestly on your attention, not merely because our predecessors in religious profession gave it forth, but on account of its intrinsic excellence.

What were the "errors, false doctrines, or mistakes," which this wise and moderate rule was intended to guard against? Such as were "against the validity of Christ's sufferings, blood, resurrection, ascension or glory in the heavens, *according as they are set forth in the Scriptures*, or any ways tending to the denial of *the heavenly man Christ*." How consonant is this with that doctrine of Barclay's, with which your committee decline saying, whether they accord or not, and which they told me, they had nothing to do with. Not so with me, because it is a doctrine I imbibed in early life, and which my riper judgment approves as sound and scriptural.

At the same time I have no wish to censure any man whose faith is shorter or more abundant than

my own. I am too sensible of my own weaknesses and imperfections, to venture to sit in judgment upon another, respecting subjects of speculative belief. "*Hast thou faith,*" said the apostle, *have it to thyself before God?* Happy is he who condemneth not himself, *in that which he alloweth.*" Rom. xiv. 22. "The great error of the ages of the apostacy has been," said Isaac Penington, vol. i. p. 323, "to set up an *outward order and uniformity*, and to make men's consciences bend thereto, either by arguments of wisdom, or by force; but the property of *the true church government*, is to leave the conscience to its full liberty in the Lord, to preserve it single and entire, for the Lord, to exercise, and *to seek unity in the light, and in the spirit, walking sweetly and harmoniously together, in the midst of different practices.*"

This is a description by an eminently pious and enlightened man, of the dispositions which ought universally to prevail among professing Christians. But, I confess, the most authentic picture of a Christian church, which has actually attained in the highest degree the proper ends of religious association, is that which the apostle Paul describes in the beginning of his second epistle to the Thessalonians. The charity of which he there speaks, was exercised by "*all, towards each other.*" It was not merely of the rich towards the poor, of the wise towards those who stood in need of instruction, of those who were as fathers in Christ towards those who were weak in the faith—but a spirit of universal charity and goodwill, pervaded the whole community. And what was the consequence? Church censures for supposed errors of the understanding? Not a word of that kind, but an abundant increase in the faith. Behold the animating picture as drawn by the pen of an apostle. I never contemplate it without wishing it may be again realized.

"Paul and Sylvanus and Timotheus unto the church

of the Thessalonians, in GOD *our Father*, and *the Lord Jesus Christ*. Grace unto you, and peace from GOD *our Father*, and the *Lord Jesus Christ*. We are bound to thank GOD always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith *groweth exceedingly*, and *the charity of every one of you all, towards each other aboundeth.*”

May these truly Christian dispositions prevail more and more. A real increase in that true faith, which worketh by love, to the purifying of the soul, cannot be otherwise reasonably expected. Nor can these happy effects be hoped for with any prospect of success, amidst the straw and the stubble which hath been scattered over the simple, immoveable foundation which Jesus Christ hath laid. His apostles strongly disclaimed having any authority to add new doctrines to those their divine master had taught. Their province was to republish and to enforce his doctrines, to testify that he was raised from the dead, and to recommend his example as worthy of all imitation; not to teach new articles of faith, and to enforce them on pain of expulsion from the church.

Who then is entitled to exercise such authority? To teach for doctrines the commandments of men, seems nearly equivalent to preaching another gospel; of the great danger of doing which we are emphatically warned in the first chapter of the apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, in stronger terms than I chuse to quote on this occasion. But I would recommend the whole chapter to your attention.

Our early Friends were eminently tolerant to each other, with regard to points of faith. To have acted otherwise would have been incompatible with the Christian privileges they so nobly asserted. And if William Penn's evidence may be credited, as to the scriptural simplicity of their faith, he declares on their behalf:—"The grace, of which we testify, hath never taught us to acknowledge another

God, than he that is *the Father of all things*, who fills heaven and earth. Neither to confess another Lord Jesus Christ, than he that appeared so many hundred years ago, made of a virgin, like unto us in all things, sin excepted; or *any other doctrine than was by him declared and practised.*”

Your committee know I have uniformly professed to believe all that Christ is recorded in the New Testament to have said concerning himself, and all the doctrines he is therein declared to have taught. Whether you may deem this a sufficient confession of faith, to entitle me still to retain the rights of membership I cannot say. But if you should not, although I by no means lightly esteem the benefits of religious association, I cannot sacrifice the rights of conscience and the exercise of private judgment to retain them; I shall yet remain, I trust, without any feeling of animosity or resentment, and with Christian good-will, your sincere friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

No observations were made on the foregoing address, or on the letter which was previously read, while I remained in the Meeting; although I more than once called upon the committee to say if I had, in the slightest degree, imputed any sentiment to them which they had not expressed, or in any way misrepresented their conduct.

Soon after I had read those papers, during the reading of which I paused occasionally to make a few verbal observations, I informed the meeting I was ready to withdraw at their request. That I was willing to leave my written address with them, which being requested, I laid the same on the table.

Before I withdrew, I observed the committee had no doubt drawn up a testimony of denial against me, as directed at the last Meeting. That I had no wish to hear it before I left the Meeting, provided it con-

tained no new accusation ; which I mentioned having known instances, in which great injustice of that kind, had been done in such documents to persons disowned. If that was in any degree the case in this instance, I claimed the right of hearing it read.

Richard Bowman replied, “ *It does not contain any new accusation !*”

On this assurance being given, I immediately withdrew. The Meeting sat about an hour afterwards, and made a minute, approving the testimony brought in by the committee, and desiring them to hand me a copy.

SUBSEQUENT CONFERENCES.

When the Meeting broke up I was shewn the testimony of denial by the persons who were appointed to draw it up. They told me, that two of them intended to have gone over to Bromley to deliver me a copy this afternoon.

On perusing the document, I felt keenly, and expressed warmly my sense of their injustice, as it included fresh charges against me, in direct violation of the positive assurances given me about an hour before, in the face of the Meeting, by Richard Bowman, on their behalf, relying imprudently on the truth of which I left the Meeting without first hearing it read. It not only contained new charges, although Richard Bowman had so recently and publicly asserted it did not, but those charges were false, and unsupported by the evidence to which the testimony of disownment appealed.

They declined all inquiry into this, but informed me they had it in commission to say, *if I meant to appeal*, the Meeting was adjourned to first day afternoon. I replied, I have nothing to say to you

upon that subject, nor do I wish your advice respecting it.

The next morning Henry Knight and Samuel Marsh called on me with a copy of the testimony of denial. When they delivered it to me, I requested them to compare what it asserts, respecting my having "joined a Society who *publicly avow* their disbelief of the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ," with any passage in the Preface to the Book of Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society, which they imagined could warrant such an assertion.

This they refused to do, alleging that the testimony was now sanctioned by the Meeting. It was their act, and they had nothing to do with it but to deliver a copy to me.

I replied, if the Meeting have sanctioned it, they did so, depending on the committee that drew it up for the truth of what it contained. That no charge of the kind I now complained of, as unjust and unfounded, had ever been alleged against me while I was present, and that falsehood and deceit could lend no aid to religion. Nor would any thing in the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, justify their assertion respecting the contents of that paper. The written address which I read to the Meeting, ought to have satisfied them that I believed divinity, in the proper sense of the word, was justly and eminently ascribable to the man Christ Jesus, which was more than I had ever heard them acknowledge.

As to their allegation above quoted, it was certainly false, and the correction of it concerned their reputation for veracity, not mine. I wished, for the credit of the Society, that their charges against me had been fairly and correctly stated. They would equally have answered the main end I was fully convinced they all along aimed at. Instead of which, much of their conduct as a committee towards me, had neither been consistent with truth, justice, fair-dealing,

sincerity or candour. In all my intercourse with mankind I never met with such a continued series of disingenuous, dishonourable conduct, as Richard Bowman and Samuel Marsh in particular had practised. There was, in my mind, a material difference in these respects between their deportment, and that of Henry Knight and John Harris, of whom I saw much less cause to complain.

The Meeting's deputies said nothing in their own defence worth mentioning, and persisted in refusing to compare the testimony of denial with the committee's report, or to give any explanation of the grounds whereon their new charges were founded, but said, they had it in commission to inform me the Monthly Meeting was adjourned to next first day afternoon, if I thought of appealing. I told them, as I did yesterday, that I had nothing to say to them respecting my intentions, nor did I wish to have their advice respecting the mode or time of appealing. Soon after this they departed.

Before another Monthly Meeting occurred, I had all the minutes respecting my case printed, but without the annexed explanatory notes, and sent a copy of them to its members generally, with the following letter in *M.S.* addressed to each, on the other side of the sheet. Viz.

COPY OF THE MINUTES OF RATCLIFF MONTHLY
MEETING RESPECTING THOMAS FOSTER.

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

12th Month, 19th, 1811.

“This Meeting being informed that THOMAS FOSTER, a member of this Meeting, *hath imbibed*, and *aided in propagating* some *opinions* contrary to the *principles of the Society*, Henry Knight, Richard

Bowman, Samuel Marsh, and John Harris are appointed to visit him thereon and report." (a)
 ("A true copy. Samuel Harris.")

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

1st Month, 23, 1812.

"Samuel Marsh reports, that the committee appointed to visit Thomas Foster, have paid him two visits; they are continued."

("A true copy. Samuel Harris.")

RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

20th of 2nd Month, 1812.

"The following Report, from the Friends appointed to visit Thomas Foster, was brought in and several times read.

"TO THE MONTHLY MEETING.

"We, your committee, appointed to visit Thomas Foster, report that we have paid him two visits since our last Meeting, *to no satisfaction.*

"We *questioned him on some important points of*

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

(a) The evidence on which this minute was ostensibly made, related solely to the party accused having given a few of his friends some copies of a paper, entitled "Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle for 1810," which first appeared in the Monthly Repository, Vol. V. p. 490; and to his being a subscriber to the "London Unitarian Book Society, for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue," on account of the following passage, which the Overseers objected to in the Preface to its Book of Rules. "While, therefore, many well-meaning persons are propagating with zeal, opinions, which the members of this society judge to be unscriptural and idolatrous, they think it their duty to oppose the further progress of such pernicious errors, and publicly to avow their firm attachment to the doctrine of the UNITY of GOD, of his UNRIVALLED and UNDIVIDED authority and dominion; and their belief that Jesus Christ, the most distinguished of the prophets, is the CREATURE and MESSENGER of God, and not his EQUAL nor his VICEGERENT, in the formation and government of the world, nor CO-PARTNER with him in divine honours." The Meeting refused to recognize these accusations *in any definite manner*, although the party accused, earnestly called upon them to do him *this necessary act of justice.*

doctrine, (b) respecting which we had strong ground to believe his opinions are at variance with those of the Society, to which he decidedly refused to answer. (c) He was also asked if he were not the author who assumes the name of Verax, (which he is publicly charged with in print, the apparent scope of whose publications is, to prove that our early Friends denied the eternal divinity of Christ; this he also refused to answer. (d)

"But he avows that he has distributed some papers, entitled, 'Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle,' calling in question the omnipotence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (e) and the propriety

(b) Is there any rule of the society that requires, or sanctions, the exercise of such inquisitorial powers? No, there is not.

(c) Can it then be justly deemed criminal for any Protestant to resist such attempts to infringe the sacred and unalienable rights of conscience? Had the party accused been within the reach of the Spanish Inquisition, he might also, for so refusing to answer, have been put to the torture to extort confession. These self-constituted Inquisitors, happily for themselves and for others, possess no such power. They have reported the claims they set up very intelligibly, and his "refusal to answer." But they are silent respecting his repeated calls upon them, to state any thing they had to allege against him, respecting the subjects of their interrogatories. They seem to have been as careful to conceal the grounds of their suspicions, as the names of his accusers. See Book of Extracts, p. 41.

(d) This subject was not referred to the committee, and the party accused declined to enter into any discussion upon it on that account. This charge against Verax is therefore very improperly brought forward. For he has distinctly shewn, by copious quotations from the works of the early Friends, that they professed to believe in the divinity of Christ, and in what sense he conceived they held that doctrine, viz. as believing that power to be Divine, which dwelt in, and acted by, or through him.

(e) Did not our great Master, who best knew what powers he possessed, and whence they were derived, when falsely charged by the calumniating Jews with "making himself equal with God," reply most emphatically and plainly as follows? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself—I can of mine own self do nothing." "The Father that dwelleth in me," said Christ, "he doeth the works." Is this to claim omnipotence? Or to disclaim it?

of applying to him in *secret supplication*, (*f*) as professed by the Yearly Meeting, in its Epistle for 1810; also, that he is a member of the *Unitarian Society*, in which he confesses *he has great satisfaction*.

“ We have endeavoured to convince him of the impropriety of his *conduct* as a member of our Society; but he is not disposed to allow that he has acted *at all* improperly or inconsistently.

“ Samuel Marsh, Richard Bowman,

“ Henry Knight, John Harris.

“ 20th of 2d Mo., 1812.

“ And the *said Report* having been *solidly considered*, this Meeting is of the judgment, that it is *incumbent upon it* to testify its disunity with *such principles and conduct*, and desires the friends before appointed, to draw up a testimony of denial against the said Thomas Foster, and bring it to our next meeting, giving him notice thereof.” (*g*)

(“ Copy. John Harris.”)

(*f*) “ The *true worshippers*,” said the lip of truth, “ *shall worship the Father*, in spirit and in truth, for *the Father* seeketh such to *worship him*.” Is it not, therefore, to “ call in question” either the knowledge or veracity of Christ, to set up any other object of worship? So far was the meek and holy Jesus from directing his disciples to apply to him for help, in subsequent ages of the Christian Church, that he says, “ In that day,” viz. after his resurrection, “ *ye shall ask me nothing*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask *the Father*, in my name, he will give it you.”

(*g*) When the “ Report” was read, the party accused objected to it, as doing him great injustice, and claimed the right of being more fully heard thereon, after a copy of the same had been given him; which being promised, he left the Meeting. Under these circumstances, “ the said Report having been” (it is said) “ *solidly considered*,” *this Minute was made!* At the next Monthly Meeting, the party accused was heard, *after judgment had thus been pronounced*, in reply to the charges in “ the said Report!” But he was induced to withdraw, before the “ Testimony of Denial” was read, relying on a positive assurance by Richard Bowman, *that it did not contain any fresh accusation!* The reader who compares it with “ their Report,” will judge *whether it does, or not*. And if he also compares

“ RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING,

“ 19th, of 3rd Month, 1812.

“ The Friends appointed to bring in a testimony of denial against Thomas Foster, brought in the draft of one, which was twice read and agreed to, and is as follows; they are desired to hand him a copy thereof. John Harris is desired to *take notice* of the disownment to the Six Weeks' Meeting.

“ It having been represented to this Meeting, that Thomas Foster, one of its members, had *imbibed* and *aided in propagating*, some *opinions* contrary to the principles of our Society, and that *private labour* had been *unavailingly extended*, (*h*) a committee was appointed to visit him thereon, who have had several interviews with him, and *from their Report it appears*, that *he has joined a society who publicly avow their disbelief* of the *eternal divinity* of Jesus Christ our Lord (*i*)—that he has *circulated* some

it with the above avowal of the London Unitarian Book Society, it will appear to be in this respect also unfounded. The party accused gave the next Monthly Meeting, held April 23d, by a letter addressed thereto, an opportunity of correcting this error, claiming at the same time the right of being heard thereon. The Meeting declined availing itself of the one, and refused to grant the other!

(*h*) If by “private labour” the Committee mean, that two of them in the capacity of “overseers,” questioned the party accused how he understood various texts of scripture, and whether he believed certain tenets proposed in unscriptural terms, there is no doubt of the fact. But there is much reason to question, their having used any judicious means whatever, to convince him of any errors they supposed he had “imbibed.” In the minutes he made of their conferences with him, their labours are amply recorded, the correctness of which they have acknowledged. Not a word of “private labour” in the minute of the committee’s appointment, nor in “their Report.” But they seem to have thought that the “Testimony of Denial” would not look well, without some appearance on the face of it, that this, the most important part of Christian discipline, had not been wholly overlooked.

(*i*) No such thing as is here asserted, *is to be found* in “their Re-

anonymous papers, entitled, Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle, *calculated* to promote *such sentiments* (*k*)—and that he is *publicly stated* to be the author of some publications under the assumed name of Verax, (*which he does not deny*) apparently intended to prove *that doctrine*, to have been *held and supported by our early Friends*. (*l*)

“They endeavoured to convince him of the impropriety of his *conduct*, and *deviation from our principles*, (*m*) but he was fully disposed to justify himself,

port.” Nor has the party accused “joined a society who publicly avow” what the “testimony” issued against him *asserts*. Nor did the committee even mention *such an accusation* at either of their “interviews” with him. See the notes (*a*) and (*g*.)

(*k*) In the “Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle” nothing is said about a belief, or “disbelief of the *eternal divinity* of Jesus Christ.” If indeed the doctrine signified by those terms *be not scriptural*, as the terms in which it is expressed *certainly are not*, the writer's recommendation “to adhere more closely to the language, and especially to the sense of scripture, on such important subjects as these,” may have caused him to be suspected of being adverse to “such sentiments.” But if so, can an avowed preference for the language of the sacred writers be consistently deemed a crime *by any Christian Society*?

(*l*) This allegation against Verax, is directly at variance with that in “their Report,” which being false, *this may be true*, as the committee have *expressed it*. Whether they meant to say “that disbelief,” instead of “that doctrine,” is not for me to determine. But it is quite clear the compilers of such documents were very ill qualified to state accurately even their own opinions on points of faith, much less those of others.

(*m*) The real complexion of these endeavours may be estimated tolerably well, by referring to the most correct and prominent feature of the committee's “Report,” in which they say “we questioned him,” &c. As to any endeavours of theirs which indicated even the appearance of a candid, impartial enquiry into the charges alleged against the party accused, and referred to their care, *they have not come to his knowledge*. But if the minutes of their “interviews” with him, including *the committee's five papers*, should be published they will exhibit in a striking point of view, and much more fully the genuine character of their labours, and I trust tend to expose and

and would not allow, that he had acted *at all* improperly or inconsistently. (n)

"This Meeting *therefore believes it incumbent upon it*, to testify its disunity with *such principles and conduct*, and hereby *disowns* the said Thomas Foster as a member of *our religious Society*; nevertheless desiring that he may hereafter *become convinced of his errors*, and be restored to religious fellowship with us." (o)

("Copy. John Harris.")

thereby discourage, such inquisitorial, irregular and intolerant proceedings.

(n) When the report was read in the Monthly Meeting, the party accused objected to the last paragraph, as importing that he claimed such an exemption from error, as the committee knew he had repeatedly disavowed. Yet is the same imputation inserted in this clause of the "Testimony of Denial!"

(o) This "non obstante clause," as it is sometimes called, is less exceptionable than some others which I have seen. But it contains the usual implied claim *to infallibility*, by holding up a conviction of the "errors imputed to the party disowned, as *the only means of restoration to "religious fellowship."* It seems also to imply an unfounded idea, that a general uniformity of belief on all important doctrines subsists amongst its members, and to intimate that no member of the Society who may imbibe and aid in propagating opinions supposed to be erroneous, is to be tolerated in a Church, which has never thought fit to establish a Creed. Is it also to be understood, that every Monthly Meeting, without the sanction *of any rule of the Society*, is competent to delegate to a committee, the power of *questioning* its members *on points of faith*, and to disown them on "their Report?" Proceedings like these may also, as in this instance, be instituted at the private instigation of over zealous disciplinarians of other Meetings. Such is the system of spiritual domination, which these proceedings directly tend to establish in a Society, which has been distinguished for its attachment to the great cause of civil and religious liberty, without an inviolable adherence to which, it is in vain to talk of "endeavouring to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." On such principles as have been professedly acted upon, in the present case, any member of the Society is liable to be disowned for having imbibed, and aided

To the Friends of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting.

Before I determine whether to appeal, or not to the Quarterly Meeting against your judgment, I would give you an opportunity of calmly reviewing your proceedings against me. To enable you individually to do this with greater ease and deliberation, I wish to present each of you with a copy of the Minutes you have recorded on your journals concerning my case.

With regard to such as were made previous to my withdrawing from the last Monthly Meeting, I have nothing more to say *at present*. But I think it proper to apprise you generally, that I mean to claim the right of being heard at the next Monthly Meeting, in reply to those charges which were subsequently brought forward in the "testimony" issued against me, in direct violation of the positive assurance given me before the last Monthly Meeting, "*that it did not contain any fresh accusation!*"

As the "testimony" appeals to the committee's "report," I wish you to compare those documents with each other, and then say, whether there is any such evidence in "their report" as the "testimony" asserts? I say there is not. And if there were, it would be easy to prove that evidence to be false. I never "joined a Society who *publicly avow*" what this "testimony" affirms. It is for you, as acting on behalf of a professed Christian church, to consider the propriety of defending such palpably erroneous assertions, because they may have been inadvertently and precipitately sanctioned.

Disowned as I am by you, I remain still uninformed who are my accusers, or what rule of the

in propagating those Christian doctrines for which William Penn suffered imprisonment, and which are explicitly laid down in Barclay's Apology as the original doctrines of the Society!

AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.

Society I am supposed to have transgressed. I am your well-wishing friend,

Bromley,
April 17, 1812.

THOMAS FOSTER.

On the 23d of April, the Monthly Meeting was again held in due course. I attended the previous Meeting for worship, at the close of which I sent in a letter to the Monthly Meeting by one of its members, of which the following is a copy.

“ TO RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING,
To be held 4th Month, 23d, 1812.

“ The “ testimony of denial” which you directed to be issued against me at the last Monthly Meeting, containing fresh charges against me, I claim the right I have not yet been allowed, of being heard thereon; not that I expect, should I succeed in convincing you of this, and that they are unfounded, that it would in any degree tend to reverse your decision.

“ I do not look for that, as you desired the “ testimony of denial” to be drawn up on such evidence as the committee’s “ report” contains. But in whatever way I may appeal against your judgment, I wish previously to give you an opportunity of reconsidering, at least those parts of the “ testimony,” by which you meant to exclude me from “ religious fellowship.” I am your well-wishing friend,

Bromley,
April 22d, 1812.

THOMAS FOSTER.”

Some time after, William Gunn and Henry Knight came out of the Meeting, and informed me they were desired to return my letter, as a request to be heard, after a testimony of disownment had been issued, was deemed inadmissible. I inquired whether

my letter had been read in the Meeting. William Gunn replied, "It has not; and *I can answer for it*, the Meeting will neither consent to hear thee, nor suffer the letter to be read. The letter was referred to two Friends, who after reading it *out of the Meeting*, reported that it was not proper to be read therein." I inquired who these Friends were? They refused to say, or to take the letter back with a request from me, that it might be read. I told them I wished to know the sense of the Meeting, and not of two Friends only.

They still refusing to take any message from me, I accompanied them into the Meeting, when I briefly assigned them my reasons for personally requesting the letter might be read, and then withdrew to wait their answer. This was conveyed by the same Friends, and to the like effect as before. Nor did they chuse to inform me *whether the letter was read or not!* Had the Meeting permitted me, I would have read the following address respecting the fresh accusations in the testimony of disownment.

TO RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

To be held 4th Month, 23rd, 1812.

Dear Friends,

You cannot, I am persuaded, have forgotten my claim, to have the testimony of denial against me read, before I withdrew from your last Meeting, if it contained any fresh charge, nor the positive assurance Richard Bowman gave me, that it did not! On receiving this assurance, I left the Meeting. When it broke up, the persons whom you appointed to draw up the testimony, gave it to me to peruse.

Fully prepared, as I was, to expect a decision against me, I did not anticipate a breach of an assu-

rance, so recently given me in the face of the Meeting. To my great surprise, I found it contained not only fresh accusations, *but such as are unfounded*. I warmly expressed my sense of the injustice, of this gross violation of truth, by which I was induced to withdraw from the Meeting, without first hearing the testimony read.

They wholly declined any enquiry into this breach of good faith, as did your two deputies the next morning, when they delivered me a copy, although I wished them to examine for themselves the truth of my assertion. They replied, *it had been sanctioned by you*, and they had nothing to do with it, but to deliver a copy to me.

Such parts of the testimony you have sent forth against me, as are really founded on the committee's report, I consider as having been sufficiently noticed in the address I read to you at the last Monthly Meeting. On these I have therefore nothing more to say, but mean to confine myself to the fresh matter it contains.

Your committee's report says, I am "a member of the Unitarian Society," but not one word of any avowal of its belief, or its "disbelief." The "testimony," although drawn up by the same persons, after noticing their "interviews" with me, and their "private labour," asserts, in your name, that "*from their report it appears,*" that I have "joined a Society who *publicly avow their disbelief of the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord.*" This assertion is not true.

The minute recording your approval of this "testimony," says it "*was twice read.*" It may have been as "solidly considered" as the "report" of your committee, but that it was judiciously or attentively considered, *I cannot believe*.

Your committee did not feel themselves bound to adhere, to the wholesome rules prescribed to every witness in a court of justice, to speak *the truth, the*

whole truth, and nothing but the truth. On the contrary, they chose in effect to represent me, as having joined *another religious Society*. Perhaps they did not incline to have a record on your journals, of the expulsion of a man for being a subscriber to a Book Society, "*instituted for the promotion of Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of Virtue.*"

In the "Report," I am said to be a member of "*the Unitarian Society,*" as if there was but *one*, and that *one*, too well known to need any farther description. There are many Unitarian Societies, instituted some for one purpose, some for another, but all "*Anti-trinitarian,*" as I always conceived the Society of Friends to be. Of these I am *now* only a member of *one*, and that is a *Book Society merely*.

Till you disowned me, I might be said to have been a member of *another Unitarian Society*; for in a work exposed for sale in the Clerks' office at Devonshire House, during the Yearly Meeting for 1805, and advertised in hand bills, distributed *from house to house*, with the Epistles for 1806 and 1807, entitled, a "*Defence of the Christian doctrines of the Society of Friends,*" by John Bevans, I find an open claim set up on their behalf, to the honourable title of "*Unitarian.*" See the Preface, p. ix.

Am I then to be censured for having asserted the same claim a few years before, when that writer professed to think otherwise? Or, are my uniform sentiments upon this point, and the more mature profession of his, in a work revised by a *select committee, verbally appointed* and sanctioned, as we have seen, erroneous? If so, how shall the honest inquirer into the real principles of the Society, know what to depend upon? And is the avowal of an opinion, *thus confirmed*, to be made the ground of censure and disownment?

Whatever might have been the motives of your committee, for not stating their accusations against

me correctly in this testimony, they have advanced in it several assertions absolutely false. Yet on a subject which they chose to take up as volunteers, they seem to have told the truth merely by mistake. For two of their assertions *respecting Verax*, are completely at variance with each other. Their report represents "*the apparent scope*" of his publications as tending "*to prove that our early Friends denied the eternal divinity of Christ.*" The testimony of denial accuses him with intending "*to prove that doctrine to have been held and supported by our early Friends.*" Such are the contradictory charges you have sanctioned.

The persons you employed were very ill qualified to judge of speculative errors. They frequently reminded me of some early converts, of whom the Apostle Paul speaks, as "*desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*" i. Tim. i. 7.

A mere suspicion that a man held what they deemed *heretical "opinions,"* seems to have rendered any proof in their estimation *unnecessary*, where all their efforts to obtain it by confession, were "*unavailingly extended.*" Nor have I been accused of any breach of a gospel precept, or with disbelieving any Christian doctrines "*as set forth in the Scriptures.*"

Had your committee, in the testimony of denial, adhered strictly to truth, and described my religious sentiments in terms I had ever used, or in any fair and candid manner, I should have been much less disposed to trouble you with an appeal to the Quarterly Meeting. And if I had, the matters at issue between us being fairly stated, the only points for the Quarterly Meeting to decide, would be, whether my having imbibed such involuntary errors as Christian truths, *merited disownment?* Whether any existing rule of the Society warranted such a measure? And lastly, whether the proceedings against me had

been according to gospel order, and the rules of the discipline?

As the case now stands, I may have occasion to call upon you to substantiate, or to withdraw, those charges against me, in support of which I have yet seen no proof. I may also require such an explanation of some of them, as may enable me, and those who are to decide between us, to understand them. My still-unknown accusers of other Meetings, under whose influence these proceedings originated, *must also be brought forth*, if justice is to be impartially administered, *and they are not in reality to be the judges of my appeal.*

It is for you to determine whether you will reconsider your proceedings in consequence of this friendly representation. If you do, whatever corrections you may make in your documents, should I afterwards appeal against your judgment, those corrections cannot strengthen my case, *but may materially yours.* The cause I have at heart, *the cause of truth*, needs no advantages of this sort, and I willingly relinquish them, well knowing, that, *if the great fundamental doctrine, the unity and supremacy of God the Father, be of men, and was not taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles, "it will come to nought,"* but if it be of God, as I firmly believe, on their testimony, *"ye cannot overthrow it."* Earnestly wishing our mutual increase in Christian *"faith, virtue, knowledge, brotherly kindness, and above all things, in charity which is the bond of perfectness,"*

I am your sincere friend,

Bromley,
April 22, 1812.

THOMAS FOSTER.

The Monthly Meeting thus refusing to reconsider any part of the proceedings against me, and the rules of the Society providing that "if any persons shall

think themselves injured or aggrieved by the judgment of any Monthly, or other, Meeting, of which they are or were members, such persons may appeal to the Quarterly Meeting, to which the said Monthly or other Meeting doth belong." I gave due notice of an appeal in the following terms.

TO RATCLIFF MONTHLY MEETING.

To be held the 14th of the 5th Month, 1812.

Dear Friends,

Under a full conviction that no rule of the Society warrants disownment, for such causes as are assigned in the "testimony of denial" you have issued against me, and in the committee's report on which it is founded, and the establishment of such a precedent appearing to me of dangerous tendency to the peace and welfare of the Society, I hereby give you notice of my intention to appeal to the Quarterly Meeting against your judgment.

As I am conscious of my own fallibility, I readily admit I may have "imbibed and aided in propagating" some "erroneous opinions." But so far as your charges are well founded, and you have correctly stated those opinions which you impute to me, as being "contrary to the principles of the Society," they are such as I "imbibed" in early life, from perusing the writings of William Penn, Robert Barclay, and other approved authors among Friends. These "opinions" also seem to me, with that increasing evidence which maturer age and subsequent deliberate examination have afforded, to be consonant with scripture doctrine, and especially with the recorded discourses and express declarations of Jesus Christ, our common Lord and Lawgiver.

It was therefore, I conceive, my duty as a member of the religious Society in which I was brought up, (to

say nothing of my superior obligations as a Christian) to omit no suitable opportunity of openly professing doctrines which appeared to me, on such powerful and concurring evidence, to be Christian truths of the highest importance, whether they might happen to be approved or not, by the leading disciplinarians of the Monthly Meeting, of which I was a member. Such was the "conduct," in whatever degree I may have "imbibed" erroneous "opinions," for which you have thought fit to disown me.

Had those "opinions" which I really held, or had openly avowed, been clearly and distinctly stated, on your records, I should have been much less likely to have troubled you with an appeal to the Quarterly Meeting. And if I had thought it necessary, the points at issue between us, would have lain in a narrower compass, and I might have been saved the most unpleasant part of my duty as an appellant, viz. that of pointing out the injustice which has been done me, by your recording an uncandid and erroneous statement of my "opinions" and "conduct."

Having sufficient reason to apprehend this might be the case, I several times requested your committee to inform me, in what terms they meant to describe *my opinions* to you, that we might, if possible, agree upon so much of their report, as related thereto. These friendly and disinterested proposals they wholly rejected. Nor was my application to you, to be heard, in reply to the fresh charges exhibited against me, brought forward a month after judgment had been pronounced, more successful!

The failure of these attempts, I lament principally on your account. It cannot prejudice my cause, in the estimation of a single person of sound judgment, of any religious persuasion. If my appeal should, in consequence thereof, be more tedious than could be wished, I trust it will be allowed I have hitherto

done all that was in my power to shorten and simplify the proceedings, and to remove the causes of mutual misapprehension. I am your well-wishing friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Bromley, May 13th, 1812.

P. S. The Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex, having a few years ago, made some fresh regulations respecting appeals, I wish you to furnish me with a copy, or to inform me how I may obtain one, that I may neither lose any privilege, to which I am entitled, as an appellant, nor transgress them through ignorance. As I may also have occasion to consult the records of the Yearly Meeting, in preparing for my defence against your accusations, I request you to give such directions to the clerk, in whose custody they are placed, for general use, as may secure my free access to them, as an appellant, so far as I may deem necessary.

Of the receipt of the above notice of appeal, the Meeting made the following minute,

“ 14th of 5th Month, 1812.

“ Thomas Foster sent in notice of his intention to appeal to the Quarterly Meeting, against our decision in his case. Richard Bowman, Henry Knight, Samuel Marsh, and John Harris, are appointed to attend to the appeal, on behalf of this Meeting.”
(Copy. John Harris.)

The above minute does not say, whether the notice was verbal, or written. My accusers and judges did not intend the notice itself, should be read. But my Brother, *Joseph Foster*, who was now present, reminding them of the propriety of reading it, the same was accordingly read.

In consequence of the foregoing request, John

Harris, the clerk of the Meeting, furnished me with a copy of the regulations of the Quarterly Meeting, concerning appeals, and intimated, that no Friend in the Meeting, appeared to think I should find any difficulty in obtaining such access to the records of the Yearly Meeting as I had requested.

The clerk, in whose custody those records are placed, having refused to allow me to inspect any part of them, I addressed a letter, of which the following is a copy, to the Meeting for Sufferings, which is in fact a standing committee of the Yearly Meeting.

TO THE MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS,

To be held 9th Month 4th, 1812.

Dear Friends,

Having given due notice to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, held 5th Month, 14th last, of my intention to appeal against its judgment, to the Quarterly Meeting, and wishing to consult the records of the Yearly Meeting, in preparing for my defence against the accusations of the said Monthly Meeting, I this day applied to the clerk, in whose custody those records are placed for general use, to permit my free access to them, as an appellant, so far as I apprehend they may be useful in my defence.

This just and reasonable right, as I consider it, and, as I was officially informed, it appeared to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, William Manley, the present clerk, by a note informs me, much to my surprise, he does not apprehend himself at liberty to grant, without your express permission. I therefore request you, as justice and impartiality require, under such circumstances, to give him directions to allow me, so far as I may deem necessary to my own defence, as free access to those records, as the mem-

bers of the Society generally have heretofore enjoyed, and are unquestionably entitled to, of common right.

I shall be in waiting in order to give any necessary explanation the Meeting may require, and to receive your answer, being with best wishes respectfully your sincere friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Bromley, Aug. 28th, 1812.

The letter was presented to the Meeting on the 4th of Sep. which, after near an hour's deliberation, informed me by two of its members, William Dilwyn and George Stacey, that the request contained in it, had been solidly considered by the Meeting, which was of the judgment, it ought not to be complied with. I requested them to state the grounds of the Meeting's refusal, and to signify the same in writing. They declined doing either, saying they had nothing farther in commission, and that I could be at no loss to apprehend the import of their message.

Discouraging as I considered the conclusion of a Meeting whose members were the most active and influential disciplinarians of the Quarterly Meeting, I persevered in my intention of appealing, convinced as I was, that it would be in effect decided upon by the same persons, who had now, in the capacity of a Meeting for Sufferings, refused me access to the records of the Yearly Meeting, or the Statute Book of the Society. I had long been aware of the delusive manner in which the sense of meetings for discipline is frequently taken. It is, perhaps, the most effectual mode of enabling a few to govern many, without the aid of force, that ever was devised, and has no parallel, that I know of, in either ancient or modern times. The form of a popular assembly is preserved, *but nothing more.*

The members of the Society are not only allowed but advised to be present, and may express their opinions on any subject under discussion; but when the collective sense of the Meeting is pretended to be taken, *no shew of hands is called for, no counting of numbers is permitted*; but the clerk records what he takes to be the sense of those whom he esteems to be *the most weighty friends present*, and this passes, and is recorded, as the general sense of the assembly, and, in cases that admit of difference of sentiment, without any rational evidence of the fact. Those who from diffidence or other causes do not speak to the subject, have no other means of expressing their opinion. Yet many of these may be no less able to judge, than their brethren who have spoken. Impressed as I had long been with these circumstances, and having also reason to suppose my unknown accusers the "many Friends," whom the overseers refused naming, were now to sit in judgment upon their own accusation, I forwarded an appeal to the next

QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX.

Held at Devonshire House, 9th Month 29th, 1812.

When a considerable part of the usual business had been gone through, John Coleby, the clerk, informed the Meeting that a paper lay on the table sealed up, and described on the outside, as an appeal to the Quarterly Meeting, against the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff. Its representatives being asked, if that Meeting had received due notice of such appeal, replied, it had, and that respondents were appointed. The Meeting being about to appoint a committee as usual in such cases, John Eliot rose and

observed, he thought the appeal could not be received, as the appellant had laid his case before the public, and had thereby deprived himself of the right of appeal.

Joseph Gurney Bevan replied, that this was premature. The Meeting did not officially know the appellant, and consequently could not judge. *But the Committee would.*

John Corbyn and William Binns were proposed as members of the committee, but declared themselves ineligible, and were excused. Luke Howard said, he accepted the appointment with reluctance, because it deprived him of a valuable privilege, that of speaking to the case in the Quarterly Meeting at large. Thomas Brewster asked, if it was to be understood, that the Friend had made up his mind respecting the case? To this I cannot learn that any reply was given. A committee consisting of two Friends from each of the Monthly Meetings, except Ratcliff, was then appointed by the following minute.

“An appeal having been brought in against the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff, the following Friends are appointed to consider the same and report.”

“Joseph Allen, John Row, for Devonshire House.
 Thomas Christy, John Sanderson, .. Gracechurch Street.
 John Eliot, Jun. Richard Barrett, .. Peel.
 John Hamilton, William Manser, .. Southwark.
 George Stacey, Jun. John Bell, Westminster.
 Luke Howard, John Barrett, Barking, &c.
 Thomas Brewster, John Colman, .. Wandsworth, &c.
 Samuel Hull, John Bailey, Longford, Uxbridge, &c.
 William Forster, Josiah Foster, Tottenham, &c. &c.

“To meet next second day week at ten, at Devonshire House, William Manley to give notice, also to the appellants and respondents.”

The next day I sent the following letter to the respondents.

TO HENRY KNIGHT, RICHARD BOWMAN, SAMUEL MARSH, and JOHN HARRIS.

Having been informed you are appointed respondents in the appeal to the Quarterly Meeting, of which I gave notice to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, which appeal was presented yesterday, and delivered as I understand *sealed up*, to one of the committee appointed to hear the same, I hereby offer you either to see, or to take a copy of such appeal, at any time you please, previous to our meeting, before the said committee, on your making such request.

I am induced to make this equitable proposal, as it strikes me, because I see no other way, till that time, in which you can regularly become acquainted with its contents; as any intercourse whatever, directly or indirectly, between either of the parties in an appeal, and any of the committee appointed to judge thereon, unless it be in the presence of the other party, or parties, would be highly indecorous and improper.

Being present in the Quarterly Meeting when the said committee were nominated, you must know whether any of my accusers of other meetings, whom you so perseveringly refused naming, had so little sense of delicacy, or justice, as to accept such an appointment. I should hope not. Nor do I harbour such a suspicion against any individual. But I shall expect to know, before I enter upon my defence before this committee, that they are free from so grievous an imputation. I am, with due respect,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Bromley, Sep. 30th, 1812.

On the 4th of October, two of the respondents, to whom the above letter was addressed, verbally informed me, they declined accepting my offer to see, or copy my appeal.

On the 8th of October, I received the following notice,

“ Respected Friend,

“ Thou art desired to attend the committee of the Quarterly Meeting, on next 2nd day, being the 12th of the 10th month, 1812, at the 10th hour, at Devonshire House, about the appeal.

“ WILLIAM MANLEY.”

“ To Thomas Foster, Bromley.”

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE,

10th Month 12th, 1812. First Sitting.

The respondents and myself, having received notice that the committee were ready to receive us, I sent a message, by William Manley, requesting permission for my father-in-law, Thomas Compton, to accompany me, which they granted.

All the committee were present, except John Sanderson.

After a short pause, Luke Howard, their Clerk, asked the respondents for a copy of the minute appointing them, which being read, Josiah Foster read my appeal, as follows.

TO THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX.

To be held the 29th of the 9th Month, 1812.

The appeal of Thomas Foster, sheweth,

1st. That he has been disowned by Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, without any just or reasonable cause, not having been even accused of a breach of any moral law, gospel precept, or rule of the Society.

2nd. That the accusations against him in the first minute of the Monthly Meeting, relative to his case, are wholly indefinite, and therefore highly improper, as naturally tending to expose him, to injurious tale-bearing and detraction.

3rd. That the report of the committee appointed to visit him by the said minute, manifests their having aimed at the exercise of inquisitorial powers, which no rules of the discipline, or of gospel order, authorize, and which your appellant, as was his duty, decidedly resisted.

4th. That the committee, in their report, irregularly and unjustly adduced a fresh charge against your appellant, on a subject which was not referred to their care by the minute appointing them, nor at all investigated, on that account, at either of their conferences with him, which charge is unfounded.

5th. That the committee, when professing to state in their report, what the party accused has avowed, use language which implies much more, than any thing he ever admitted, will warrant. He therefore calls upon them, to say more correctly what he really avowed, concerning these branches of their accusation.

6th. That the committee's report, however "solidly considered," does not contain, as the Monthly Meeting seem to have imagined, any sufficient justification of its decision thereon.

7th. That the testimony issued against your appellant, holds forth additional encouragement to detraction tale-bearing, by adopting the indefinite terms of the minute above-mentioned.

8th. That the said testimony, contains a specific charge which is unfounded, as the evidence it appeals to, will at any time prove.

9th. That the said testimony, alleges another accusation, which is directly at variance with a prior

charge, on the same subject, in the committee's report.

10th. That your appellant never called in question, the omnipotence of the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; or the divinity of that power, which most eminently and transcendently dwelt in, and acted by, or through him, the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who declared that of himself, or without his Father's assistance, he could do nothing; and that the true worshippers, should worship the Father, the propriety of applying to whom, in secret or open supplication, in spirit and in truth, under any scriptural designation, your appellant never called in question. But he continues to object, as he conceives, on the clearest and strongest scriptural grounds, to the propriety of ascribing omnipotence to that man, whom God hath ordained, and by whom, *he will judge the world* in righteousness; or of applying to him, the man Christ Jesus, in secret supplication, as the one only true object of supreme worship, who alone heareth prayer, and hath immortality in, and of himself.

11th. That your appellant is a member of various Book Societies, some instituted for the promotion of Christian knowledge, and the practice of Virtue, some for the extension of Science, and general literature. In the latter, by far the most exceptionable works are to be found. But your appellant, is not even censured for his connection therewith; which connection, is precisely similar to that which subsists between him, and the former. Yet his being a subscriber to one of these, is objected to in the report of the committee, as an "impropriety," meriting disownment. For which judgment, it assigns no reason, unless a fallacious description of the Society, may be esteemed one, which seems to have been

intended to conceal, that it was a mere *Book Society*, and to imply, that your appellant had become a member of another distinct religious community, which is not true.

12th. That the “opinions” of your appellant, which are said by his accusers to be “contrary to the principles of the Society,” are such as he has held, and professed from his youth upwards, having in reality imbibed them, as the genuine doctrines of the early Friends, from no slight acquaintance with their works, particularly those of Penn, Barclay, Fox, and Penington.

13th. That your appellant was never before subjected to a disciplinary visit, on any charge of delinquency whatever, or, on account of the adoption, or propagation of “opinions,” supposed to be erroneous. And your appellant solemnly assured the overseers, at their first visit, verbally, and soon afterwards under his own hand, “that to the best of his knowledge, he believed all that Christ is recorded in the New Testament, to have said concerning himself, and his doctrines,”—and that your appellant “considered his authority, as far superior to any other, in all that respected faith and worship.” It is for you to decide, whether more than this, can be consistently required of its members, *and by whom*, as a requisite profession of faith, in a religious Society, which, like the primitive Christian church, has never thought fit to establish a creed, “either as a condition of membership, or a qualification for the service of the church.”

14th. That the visits your appellant received from the overseers of the Monthly Meeting, and its committee, on this occasion, were of such a character, as indicated no just regard to the primary object of all true Christian discipline, viz. to reclaim the party supposed to be in error, but evinced a predetermination, ill-concealed during the two visits of the over-

seers, and still more apparent and unequivocal, in those of the Monthly Meeting's committee, to accuse and disown, under the predominant influence of "Friends of other Meetings," who had long been instigating the overseers, to proceed against your appellant as a delinquent, on such grounds as the overseers, after all this prompting, did not pretend to understand, but openly professed to your appellant, their inability to investigate.

15th. That under these circumstances, your appellant called upon the overseers, and afterwards upon the Meeting and its committee appointed to visit him, to say who those Friends of other Meetings were, and what they had alleged, as matter of accusation against your appellant; with which reasonable request they wholly refused to comply, notwithstanding the express injunctions of the Yearly Meeting's minute of 1744.—Book of Extracts, p. 41, were repeatedly urged as absolutely requiring them to render him that necessary act of justice. [For which see p. 35.]

16th. That the Monthly Meeting's committee, refused to give your appellant, the reasonable and necessary explanation he requested of them, to enable him to understand their written accusations, which were most ambiguously expressed; or to inform him what their own sentiments were, respecting the "most important points of doctrine," on which they "questioned him," as stated in their report, and to which, as they say, "he decidedly refused to answer."

17th. That to sanction and confirm, such disciplinary proceedings as these, would be to establish a precedent, for the erection of an inquisition in every Monthly Meeting, to be invested with undefined powers, to question its members upon points of doctrine, not with a view to instruct, enlighten, and edify, but to censure and disown. Not to encourage

amongst its members a candid spirit of free enquiry, and a pure love of truth, but to incite each petty tribunal, to decide authoritatively, on articles of belief, and controversies of faith.

18th. That the assumption of such arbitrary and undefined powers by Monthly Meetings, would be, in effect, to render all the rules of the Yearly Meeting, which authorize disownment in a variety of cases, specifically laid down in the Book of Extracts, completely nugatory and useless.

19th. That your appellant does not even wish, much less does he look to you, for any authoritative declaration as judges of his appeal, in favour of any "opinions" he may have "imbibed, or "aided in propagating." He is conscious they must stand or fall, by the evidence on which they are respectively founded, not by the suffrage of majorities, however numerous, but as they are founded, or are not, on the solid, immoveable basis of reason and revelation. Majorities may determine the general sense of collective bodies of men, concerning any question that is brought before them, but they are no tests of truth. Nor can your appellant, consistently with his sense of duty as a Christian, refer matters of faith and worship, to any human tribunal, as being competent to decide for him thereon. It would be, in his apprehension, to disclaim the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is appointed by *his God, the Father of Glory*, "to be head over all things to the church."

20th. That your appellant does however earnestly call upon you, impartially to consider with due deliberation, and conscientiously to decide, whether his accusers have proved, that he has broken any, and what rule of the Society; and whether the rules of the discipline and of gospel order, have been duly observed throughout the proceedings against him, on account of such errors as he is supposed to have

imbibed concerning the principles of the Society, or those of "our early Friends." Respecting your decision, he trusts the principal solicitude he feels, is, that it may be such, as will eventually be most promotive of the great cause of genuine scriptural Christianity, and secondly, that it may also be for the reputation of the Society, whose prosperity as a Christian church, he most earnestly wishes, and remains your sincere friend,

Bromley,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Sept. 28th, 1812.

The Clerk made a minute, signifying that *an appeal* from Thomas Foster, against the judgment of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, had been read in the committee. He then inquired if I had any thing more to offer.

Before I could reply to this question, Richard Bowman informed the committee, that a publication had come out, relating to this case, which the respondents thought, the committee should be acquainted with: and he then presented the committee with a pamphlet, entitled a Portraiture of Primitive Quakerism; or, "The Sandy Foundation Shaken, by William Penn."—With a modern Sketch of reputed Orthodoxy, and real Intolerance, by Ratcliff Monthly Meeting." On the tract being handed to the Clerk, he inquired what part of this publication the respondents alluded to? Richard Bowman replied, to that part which contains a "Copy of the Minutes of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting respecting Thomas Foster, with explanatory notes."

The Clerk then requested the respondents and the appellant to withdraw, that the committee might consider what had been laid before them. I observed that before this subject had been introduced by the respondents, I had been asked a question by the Clerk, to which I had not yet been allowed an opportunity of replying. I had nothing

more to offer, at present, in support of the appeal, but I did not mean thereby to preclude myself from saying hereafter, whatever I might think proper. When I sat down, the Clerk said it was the duty of the committee, at a proper time, to hear both parties, fully.

Before we withdrew, I observed there was one matter which I thought I could not mention too early, the respondents having refused to give me any satisfaction upon it, without the committee's permission. They must have seen by my appeal, that the overseers acknowledged their having been incited by "Friends of other Meetings" to commence these proceedings against me. I therefore wished them to inform me, whether any of those persons were nominated on this committee.

The Clerk replied, the committee was chosen in the usual manner; they had nothing to do with such an objection, unless I could allege that any of the committee had so acted as to disqualify them for deciding with impartiality. It concerned only the appellant and the respondents, and should be settled between themselves. I assured the committee I had endeavoured carefully to guard myself against letting in suspicion of any individual. I was ignorant who those persons were, but the overseers *must* know. And it was somewhat remarkable, that Richard Bowman, in reply to another question, informed me that they had held no intercourse with any of the committee *since their appointment*. It would be for their reputation, and that of the Society, for them to be totally free from such an imputation.

Richard Bowman at length assured me, that none of those Friends, whom I called my accusers, were members of the committee.

The respondents and myself having withdrawn, the committee sat about an hour. When we were again called in, the Clerk informed us that the commit-

tee had perused the pamphlet laid before them by the respondents, and had concluded not to proceed farther in hearing the case, without referring it to the Quarterly Meeting, unless I would say I had neither published, nor been privy to the publication of that pamphlet.

I replied, I should certainly, on the grounds mentioned in my appeal, *decline answering any such interrogatories*. I had given way too much already upon that point, which was most perseveringly urged by the Monthly Meeting's committee, in a manner which satisfied me I ought to resist every pretension of so dangerous a tendency, with still greater firmness. That I had endeavoured to inform myself what the regulations of the Society were respecting appeals, to which I had, to the best of my judgment, strictly conformed. The only rule of the Yearly Meeting to which I thought they could allude, related solely to appeals to that Meeting. It was made on the spur of a particular occasion, not the most favourable time for legislating wisely. The late John Roper, of Norwich, had printed *his appeal* to the Yearly Meeting, and copies of it were distributed among Friends, during the hearing. On which, the Meeting made a minute in these terms.—“ *This Meeting agrees not to receive in future, any appeal in print, or that hath been printed.*” It cannot be said, that my appeal has been printed. It is true, I have seen and approve those explanatory notes, as a suitable correction of the minutes concerning my case, which contain such statements, *as have all the effect of direct and injurious falsehoods.*

The Clerk repeatedly wished me to reconsider the resolution I had expressed, saying it would be kind and friendly of me *to answer their question*, as I must know, whether I had been concerned in publishing that pamphlet. He added, that the committee had concluded not to go farther into the appeal

unless I did, *and that no advantage would be taken of my answer, whatever it might be.* That if I could say, I had nothing to do with its publication, the committee *would readily take my word for it.* I answered, my resolution was immoveable, being fully convinced of its propriety ; nor could I refrain from expressing my surprise at the conclusion of the committee. I did them the credit of supposing, when the respondents and myself were requested to withdraw, that they would not have decided a point of so much importance, as referring the matter to the Quarterly Meeting, on the consideration of evidence adduced by one of the parties, without previously calling upon the other, to know what he had to allege upon that evidence. Such was, however, the course they had thought fit to pursue.

The Clerk replied, *they did not determine the question,* but only referred it *to the consideration of the Quarterly Meeting ;* after which he inquired of the respondents whether *they knew,* that I had published the minutes of the Monthly Meeting, with the explanatory notes ? Richard Bowman replied, "*they did not know that I had.*"

The Clerk observing, that the appellant would have a full opportunity of being heard in the Quarterly Meeting, *even to make a speech of two hours long if he chose it,* on the subject they meant to refer to the consideration of that Meeting, Richard Bowman now disclosed, that the object of the respondents was, to prevent my being at all heard against their accusations, by saying, *he thought that was a point the Clerk was not competent to determine.* Luke Howard replied, he could not pretend to legislate for the Quarterly Meeting, or to say how they would act, farther than that he supposed they were bound *to act, according to their own rules.* One, or two of the committee observed, that what the Clerk had said, was

to be considered *only as his private sentiments*, and not *as the judgment of the committee*.

As to my right of being fully heard before the Quarterly Meeting, I told the committee I felt perfectly easy, *whatever report they might make*, as it was a right, as expressly secured to every appellant that chose to claim it, by the Meeting's regulations concerning appeals, *as language could readily furnish*.

The respondents and myself being requested to withdraw, we were soon after informed the committee had no farther occasion for our attendance. They declined giving either of the parties, a copy of the minute of their appointment, of the minute respecting their reference of the case to the Quarterly Meeting, or of the minute appointing the respondents.

QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX.

Held by adjournment the 2nd of the 11th Month,
1812.

After transacting the other business before the Meeting, the Clerk observed that no business remained, but that of taking into consideration the report of the committee on the appeal. Thomas Compton presented a letter from me to the Meeting, of which the following is a copy.

TO THE ADJOURNED QUARTERLY MEETING OF
LONDON AND MIDDLESEX.

To be held 11th Month, 2d, 1812.

Dear Friends,

I would not be understood by this letter, as expressing any doubt of your disposition to do impartial justice between the parties to the appeal, which

at your last sitting, you referred to a committee chosen in the usual manner. But that committee having thought fit to defer hearing the parties thereon, almost as soon as the said appeal had been read, until they had reported to you a plea advanced by the respondents, I trust this application will not be deemed improper or disrespectful. By one of your regulations for "conducting appeals," it is directed "that the committee give notice to both parties, of the time, when they intend to deliver in their report." Such notice to me may have miscarried. I have received none, if any has been sent. The same rule provides that, "the person appealing, or some friend or friends in his behalf, have liberty to be present to hear *the report read*." And although it does not seem, expressly to contemplate more than one report from any committee on an appeal, the spirit of the regulation equally requires the respective parties to be present, to hear any report such a committee may make, if the possible issue of it can, in any manner affect the rights and privileges of either party.

To whatever cause, therefore, my not having received due notice to attend to-morrow morning, to hear the committee's report read, is to be attributed, the object of this letter is to prevent your inadvertently receiving it in an irregular manner, and, as your appellant, to claim my right to be present to hear the said report read. I am your sincere, well-wishing Friend,

Bromley,
Nov. 1st, 1812.

THOMAS FOSTER.

This letter was not permitted to be read, but it was proposed that the appellant should be invited into the Meeting, *according to rule*, to hear the report read, should he be so disposed. Luke Howard, on behalf of the committee, informed the Meeting *they*

had no report to make, but they had some written information to present. George Harrison said, he hoped the committee would excuse him. If they had something to offer to the Meeting, that something must be *a report, a report of some kind or other*. Luke Howard said, *he could not see it in the light of a report, properly speaking*, nor the necessity of the appellant's *being present to hear it read*. This proposal was opposed by several Friends, who said, that if the information was in any degree interesting to both parties, they must of course be present to hear it.

It was at length agreed, that the appellant should be admitted *to hear the report read*, and then *withdraw, and the respondents also*, without making any remarks, leaving the Meeting to consider its contents. I was accordingly introduced by Thomas Compton, to a seat near the table, when the clerk informed us of the determination of the Meeting, and then read *the report* of the committee.

Being satisfied that the report, and the injunction of silence *on both parties*, after hearing it read, was intended to deprive me of any opportunity of being heard, *in case the Meeting should coincide in judgment with its committee*, I rose merely to claim that right, *before the Meeting came to such a conclusion*. But my speaking at all, being objected to, by a very respectable Friend, I sat down immediately, and soon after withdrew with the respondents.

The Meeting then proceeded to consider the subject before them. I understand that several Friends expressed their astonishment, at the complexion of the report, and the committee were desired to give some verbal explanation. Luke Howard said, he thought *their motive and meaning must be obvious to Friends*. *Friends must be aware of the awkward predicament in which the respondents were placed*; that of answering an appeal made to the Society, and to the public at large, *at one, and*

the same time. (a) Friends would please to observe that they had not referred to any rule of the Society, nor to any thing in the Book of Extracts. (b)

Some friends appeared to apprehend there was a rule, which would apply to the case, but Joseph Gurney Bevan remarked, that, as the committee had not referred to any rule, *he thought it better not to seek for one. Producing rules not to the point, would only tend to confuse Friends minds.* Some Friends remaining dissatisfied, the Clerk said, he would read the rule, which he supposed Friends had in view. It is as follows—“*This Meeting [the Yearly Meeting] agrees not to receive, in future any appeal in print, or that hath been printed.*”

J. G. Bevan remarked, *that this was nothing to the purpose*, because it was a rule belonging to the Yearly Meeting only, and that it was no credit to the committee, to have sent such a piece of paper into the Meeting. George Harrison said, he would readily admit the good intention of the committee, but he must say, they had been guilty of great inadvertence, to say the least of it, for, instead of judging between the parties, they had appealed to the appellant himself. However we might lament the publication of the tract in question, as the appellant had not transgressed any rule of the Society, the committee should have proceeded in the case.

Luke Howard informed the Meeting, that what

(a) This is not correct, the appeal to the public was made about six months before, and comprised the whole of the respondents' case, *as stated by themselves, and by the Meeting*, with a few notes to explain such facts, as were indefinitely, or erroneously stated on the Meeting's records, which I gave them a previous opportunity of correcting. It was not therefore an *ex parte* statement, tending to prejudice the minds of friends by partial and garbled evidence.

(b) The committee were no doubt aware, there was no rule that applied to the case. It was an undisguised attempt to exercise a *rigour beyond the law.*

they had brought forward, *was not the whole of the ground* which had induced them to come to the Quarterly Meeting *for direction*, and intimated that what they had withheld, *was more weighty than what they had advanced*. Thomas Brewster said, *other things had come to the knowledge of the committee*, (c) Luke Howard admitted that the committee had entertained an idea, that the Meeting *might order them to proceed no further*.

The Meeting, however, desired the committee to proceed to hear the parties, and report.

Friends now appeared under no small degree of embarrassment, as to the preferable mode of disposing of the committee's report, and recording the proceedings. They hesitated to record the report itself, from motives of delicacy and tenderness towards the committee, to whom the report was thought by many to be no credit; and that to Friends of future times, it might appear, either that the committee had been lacking in wisdom, or that their motives were obscure, and their conduct unaccountable. The Meeting seemed so much against recording the report, that it was given to Luke Howard, as a paper with which the Meeting had no more concern.

Some Friends were for recording the committee's labours in a shape somewhat different from that in which they had been presented, and in a less exceptionable manner. But this proposal was found so difficult to execute, that it was soon abandoned. It was then suggested that a minute might be made, signifying that the committee *were not ready with their report*. This was rejected, because it would be misrepresentation on the part of the Meeting.

(c) What these other, and *more weighty things*, could possibly be, I cannot imagine; as no other plea was advanced than the one noticed in the committee's report, *while I was present*. Is it possible any of the committee could have listened to evidence against me in my absence? It should seem so by these assertions.

not to mention that it would open a door for imputations of indolence, or negligence, on the part of the committee. Several Friends thought, it was unnecessary to make any minute about the matter, but this was found impracticable; because, as the Meeting had appointed the committee at the last sitting, and had given them almost five weeks to go through the business assigned them, Friends could do no less than call for a report, which would lead to a minute of some kind or other.

J. G. Bevan said, that, in his view, the best way was, to record the report of the committee, and let them speak for themselves. *He had no doubt but that all the proceedings of Friends, in this case, would be published to the world;* and the best way was to have every thing *just, upright and honourable;* for any attempt to hide, as well as the thing attempted to be hidden, *would only meet with exposure.* Samuel Harris observed, that the appellant possessed no copy of the report, nor did he perceive, *that he was ever likely to obtain one.* William Binns said, he could not see, that the report, or the conduct of the committee, was any disgrace to them; for though it did not appear, that the conduct of the appellant, deprived him of the right of appeal, *it ought to have deprived him.*

It was finally agreed to record the committee's report, and the following minutes were annexed thereto.

"The following minute was brought in from the committee on the appeal, against Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, and read in the presence of the appellant, and respondents.

" COMMITTEE ON APPEALS,
Appointed by the Quarterly Meeting of London and
Middlesex.

10th Month, 12th, 1812.

Present all the committee, except John Sanderson.

This committee having read the appeal of Thomas Foster, against Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, in the presence of the appellant and respondents, the respondents produced a pamphlet, *which has been some time in print*, having an appendix, entitled, "Copy of the Minutes of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, respecting Thomas Foster, with explanatory notes," *and which appears to contain a case, on behalf of the appellant, against Ratcliff Monthly Meeting.* (a) The same having been read, and considered, the appellant had opportunity given him, to disavow it, as his publication, or as published with his knowledge, on his behalf. He did not choose, either to own, or to disavow it, but admitted he had read it, *and thought the notes on the Meeting's proceedings to be well founded.*

Under these circumstances, the committee does not feel inclined, to call upon the respondents for their reply, (*seeing the case is thus already before the Society at large,*) until it has the direction of the Quarterly Meeting, so to do.

Luke Howard is desired to take *this Report*, to the Quarterly Meeting.

Copy from the minutes of the committee,

Luke Howard.'

" And being considered, the committee is desired

(a) If this "Pamphlet" does "contain a case, *on behalf of the appellant*, against Ratcliff Monthly Meeting," as the committee assert, by far the most weighty and decisive part of it, consists, in the striking contrast, which Penn's Portraiture of Primitive Quakerism, or, as he called it, the "Sandy Foundation Shaken," furnishes, when compared with the Modern Sketch of Reputed Orthodoxy, by Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, as exhibited in its own minutes. In this comparison, lies the real strength of the appellant's case, as stated in that pamphlet, and not in the explanatory notes, which are comparatively unimportant, and rather tend to divert the attention of the reader, from the very discordant features of those documents when compared with each other.

to proceed with the business committed to it, and report.

This Meeting adjourns to this day two weeks, at ten.

Copy. William Manley."

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE.

11th Month, 2nd, 1812. Second Sitting.

Sixteen of the committee present.

After a short pause, the appeal was read by Luke Howard, as inserted p. 130—136.

The respondents being called on to reply, John Harris read the minutes of the Monthly Meeting, as given p. 108—114. They were then delivered to the committee.

After this Richard Bowman read a paper, containing the respondents brief statement of their labours. It stated, that in, or *about*, the 8th Month, 1811, a Friend, in the station of overseer, heard that I had *distributed* some of the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1810, and in consequence thereof, paid me a visit, from which he did not receive *any satisfaction*.

That the same Friend, with another overseer, paid me two visits, to *no better satisfaction than the former*. It then stated the report of the case to the Monthly Meeting, the appointment of a committee to visit me, *and their having thought it right to question me upon points of doctrine*. That they mentioned to me the authorities on which *they believed I held opinions contrary to the doctrines of the Society*.

Henry Knight then read the passage they objected to, in the preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society. The respondents also informed the committee, *that they questioned me*, respecting the encouragement I had given to the "Improved Version of the New Testament," *which I had acknowledged*. As also concerning the publications under the name of *Verax*, which I denied their

right to enquire into, under the minute of their appointment, *and refused to answer their interrogatories on that account.*

A member of the committee enquired of the respondents, what Society, they meant to say, the appellant was a member of, when they stated him to be *a member of the Unitarian Society?* Did they mean to say, he was a member of a Society, under that name, associated as a Society *for the purposes of religious worship*, as might be understood by the terms they used?

John Harris said, it might have been better if they had said, Thomas Foster was a member of *an* instead of *the* Unitarian Society, but they only meant that he was a member of that *Book* Society. On this admission, I informed the committee that I had taken much pains to prevent the respondents stating this fact, in so delusive a manner. And after my remonstrances with them thereon, it was difficult to believe, they did not express themselves in that manner, for the purpose of misrepresentation.

Richard Bowman informed the committee, that the reason they refused to inform me, who their informants were, was because I had admitted having *distributed* some of the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and he said, the overseers denied *having been led on by Friends of other Meetings.* But he afterwards admitted, that one Friend had come down from London, *on purpose to represent to him, it was the duty of the overseers to take up the case.* And Henry Knight admitted, *that several Friends had spoken to him in a similar manner.* But he did not mean to allude to them, when he said, that not so few as nine or ten Friends, had spoken to him on the subject. They had, it seems, not given their opinion about the propriety of taking up the case, but only spoken their own sentiments upon it. He added, that he had heard it spoken of *in large companies, and in several counties.*

On reading my minutes of the visits I had received from the overseers, till I came to my letter to them, dated Nov, 17th last, and my minutes of the conference with them the same day, Richard Bowman represented that they had said the 20th rule, under the head meetings for discipline, would *bear them out in reporting my case to the Monthly Meeting*, instead of saying that they meant to proceed *in part upon that rule*. I reminded him that I had stated the fact in that letter, I believed correctly, to which they made no objection at the time, and informed me at the next Monthly Meeting, that they thought no communication with me necessary *concerning its contents*, which they would hardly have done, if it misrepresented what they had said.

Henry Knight informed the committee, I had put a great number of questions to them *upon abstruse points of doctrine*, such as they did not think it proper to go into. I was surprised at this assertion, and called upon the respondents to mention a single instance in which I had acted in this manner. They had put many such questions to me, whereas I was not conscious I had put one to them respecting any doctrines, but such as related to their accusations.

When I had read my minutes of the overseer's visits, p. 1—14. my letters to them, p. 14—25. I proposed that the respondents should be called upon to reply to that part of my statement, that the committee might decide, if they should think proper, whether such private labour had been bestowed on me, as the nature of the case required, and the rules of the discipline enjoined. As, should they be of opinion with me there has not, I supposed it would be unnecessary to proceed farther. The respondents objected to this proposal, in such a manner as satisfied me it was useless to make any similar effort to shorten the proceedings; I did not afterwards attempt it. The committee desired me to proceed. I then read

my minutes of the proceedings of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, p. 30—39. and of the first visit of its committee, 1st Month, 15th, 1812.

At this conference, Henry Knight read the following passage from the 1st § of Penn's "Innocency with her Open Face," to shew that William Penn believed Christ to be God.

"The Proverbs, which as most agree, intend Christ *the Saviour*, speak in this manner.—'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.' 'I, (wisdom) lead in the midst of the paths of judgment:' 'I was set up from everlasting,' to which Paul's words allude, 'unto them which are called (we preach) Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God;' from whence," says William Penn, "I conclude Christ *the Saviour*, to be God; for otherwise *God would not be himself*, since if Christ," [that is, Christ the Saviour, before spoken of, not *the Man Christ Jesus*,] "be *distinct from God*, and yet God's power and wisdom, God would be without his own power and wisdom; but inasmuch as it is impossible God's power and wisdom should be distinct or divided from himself, it reasonably follows, that Christ [the Saviour,] who is that power and wisdom, is not distinct from God, but entirely that very same God."

A little lower down Penn adds,

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all: from whence I assert the unity of God and Christ, because, though nominally distinguished, yet essentially the same *divine light*; for if Christ be that *light*, and that *light*, be God, then is *Christ God*, Again, Rev. xxi. 23. 'And the city had no need of the sun, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb, (Christ) is the light thereof, by which *the oneness of the nature of these lights plainly appears*; for since God is not *God*, without his own glory,

and that his glory lightens, (which it could never do if it were not light) and that the lamb, or Christ is that very same light, what can follow, but that *Christ the light*, and *God the light*, are ONE pure and eternal light."

I told the committee I had been long conversant with these passages, and thought I understood in what sense William Penn ascribed divinity to Christ, in those and other parts of his writings; that it was not to *the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, personally considered*, but to that divine power which dwelt in and acted by him, to which he himself uniformly attributed *all the powers he possessed*. I had never denied or questioned the power, by which he performed all his wonderful works, being divine. But I thought it was much better to adhere strictly to the language of the Scriptures, as divinity had been by many professors of Christianity ascribed *to the person of Christ, or to the man Christ Jesus*, which I saw no reason to believe William Penn intended in any of those passages. I then read the following extract from his works.

"This was it," says he "which gave *the manhood*, the understanding it had, and fitted it for so great an embassy, *by whose power alone*, it fasted, prayed, preached, cast out devils, *wrought miracles*, lived that most unblemished life, patiently suffered death, was raised for an holy confirmation. And *this divine power it was which accompanied the ministry of his followers*; rendering it efficacious to conviction and conversion. So that the invisible, spiritual, and divine life, principle, or nature, *was the root and fountain* of all which is sometimes ascribed in Scripture *to the body*, by that common figure or way of speaking amongst men, *the thing containing*, which was the body, for *the thing contained*, which was *the eternal power, wisdom, life, &c.*

Not that we should irreverently rob *the holy body*,

of whatsoever acknowledgment is justly due, not yet separate that, which *God hath joined*. Though I confess, with holy fear, *I dare not attribute that to an external, prepared Being*, which is the natural, proper, and only work of *the divine light and life to operate and effect*. But certainly if some men in Scripture are intituled *Saviours*, because of the contribution of their trials, travels, and labours towards the salvation of mankind, *of much more right is that honour ascribable to him, who had the spirit without measure.*" A reference to these extracts is given in p. 67.

The committee adjourned to the back chamber, Gracechurch Street, to the next day, at three in the afternoon.

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE.

11th Month, 3d, 1812, Third Sitting.

Fifteen of the Committee present.

When I was called upon to proceed with my defence, I observed that some very judicious observations had been made yesterday by some of the committee, on the importance of correctly ascertaining plain matters of fact, from the respective parties to the appeal, as their judgment must be, in great measure founded thereon.

I had therefore made minutes, as correctly as I was able, of such objections as the respondents had urged, as also of some important admissions of theirs, in order that these matters might be agreed on, while they were fresh in their recollection; which, with the Meeting's permission, I would now read.

This proposal being objected to by the respondents, we were desired to withdraw. When we were again admitted, the Clerk of the committee informed me, I was at liberty, by way of recapitulation, to restate any parts which I thought might contribute to

my defence. But that neither the committee, nor the respondents were to be expected to object to any errors that my minutes might contain; nor was their silence to be considered as implying an admission of their correctness.

I then read the same, till I came to the substance of the committee's report to the Quarterly Meeting, when I requested a copy. Luke Howard said, I must know it was the property, or at the disposal of the Quarterly Meeting, and asked if I demanded a copy. I told him I requested one, which I hoped the committee would grant. I then read my account of its import. But when I noticed the paper the respondents had read in reply to my appeal, I was interrupted by William Forster, who requested that we should withdraw.

We did so, and when we were again admitted, I requested leave of the committee for Thomas Compton to accompany me, which they readily assented to, and he was present during the remainder of the sitting. The clerk of the committee then informed me, that they considered part of what I had read as *irrelevant matter*, but that they were disposed to hear any thing which I thought might be of use in my defence. I assured them, had I been aware my proposal would have been objected to, or have occupied so much of their time, I would not have made it. If I had acted, in any degree, in an irregular manner, I trusted they would excuse it, as I had never before been placed in a similar situation; that my object was to save time in the future stages of the discussion, and to promote a mutual understanding of the points at issue.

The Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, by an Unitarian Christian were next read, as inserted p. 39—45. After which I read my minutes of the proceedings of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, as given p. 48—52, and then my minutes of the conference

with its committee, Jan. 22, 1812, when they recommended to my attention sundry papers. The two first being somewhat connected, I call No. I. It contains the following replies to the 1st, 2nd and 4th queries in p. 61.

“The minute, [of the Monthly Meeting say the committee] *charges thee with nothing specific*; but the Friends who have visited thee before, charge thee with holding *that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent, nor the proper object of worship.*” In reply to the 2nd query, they say, “The principles of the Society, in our opinion, clearly and explicitly laid down, may be found in Sewel’s History, new edit. Vol. ii. p. 497 to 500. Summary.—Yearly Meeting’s Epistles, various Extracts.” Viz.

1683.	3rd Par.	p. 17.	1740.	“last Par.	p. 204.
1683.	1st	p. 19.	1740.	.....	p. 206.
1684.	.....	p. 24.	1743.	1st	p. 213.
1691.	.....	p. 57.	1747.	last....	p. 228.
1695.	.....	p. 74.	1748.	1st	p. 229.
1695.	“last	p. 77.	1751.	last	p. 242.
1696.	1st	p. 79.	1753.	2d	p. 249.
1699.	.....	p. 85.	1756.	.....	p. 262.
1700.	.....	p. 87.	1758.	last	p. 271.
1704.	last	p. 99.	1759.	2d	p. 272.
1706.	1st	p. 102.	1758.	last	p. 275.”
1712.	2d	p. 120.	1760.	.....
1715.	1st 2d & last	124.	1662.	.....
1717.	1st.	p. 130.	1763.	.....
1722.	last	p. 147.	1765.	9th	
1729.	.....	p. 166.	1772.	last ..	
1731.	.....	p. 173.	1773.”	
1734.	1st	p. 180.”			

The five first passages in the above list were quoted by the committee; the rest they only referred to. The Yearly Meeting’s Epistles, from 1681 to 1759, were published in one vol. fol. in 1760, to which the pages refer. As to the third query, in p. 61, the the committee confessed they were unable to say when, or from whence, I had “imbibed” the opi-

nions they charged me with holding. Their reply to the fourth query is inserted in p. 91. par. 3d.

For a copy of the next paper, the committee referred to my attention, [No. II] see p. 92—93. No. III. is as follows.

“On what ground do you impute omnipotence to Jesus Christ.” To this question, as stated by themselves, they refer me to the following texts: viz. “Mat. xi. 6.—xvi. 27.—xxviii. 18. John i. 10.—iii. 31. 34.—v. 26.—x. 30.—xiv. 9. Eph. i. 21.—1 Cor. i. 24. Col. i. 15.—ii. 2. Heb. i. 2.” After this list, they refer me to the following “passages, wherein [they say] *the Godhead of Christ is asserted.*” Viz. John i. 1. 10. 30.—xiv. 9.—xviii. 11. 21. 22. Rom. ix. 5. Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. 2. 3. iii. 16. 2 Tim. iii. 10.”

In the paper, No. 4. the committee say, “It appears to be the opinion of the Society, that Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father, to be the Saviour of the world, is, with the Father, worthy of glory, honour, dominion and praise; and we apprehend the following texts, with others, authorize it. John v. 22. 23.—xiv. 13. 14. Heb. i. 6. 1 Peter iv. 11. 2 Peter iii. 18. Rev. v, at large.—vii. 10. 1 Cor. i. 2. Acts vii. 59.”

When I had finished reading my minutes of this conference, I also read my minutes of the next, on Feb. 7, 1812, with the Monthly Meeting’s committee, including the following observations on those papers.—Viz.

Whether the passages you have selected, are such as the minute of your appointment refers to, or have been since looked out, as the most pertinent you could find, the far greater part appear to me totally inapplicable to the professed object of your selection. How came you to pass over in silence the fifteen Theses Theologiæ of Barclay, or his propositions in defence of “the true Christian Divinity?”

Instead of this, you refer me to a passage in Sewel's History [1st Edit. p. 644.] which relates to a controversy between the Society and George Keith, "who appeared," says Sewel, "in the annual assembly at London, anno 1694: but there he shewed himself *so passionate and boisterous*, that no means could be found *to compose the difference*."

George Keith was indeed highly to blame, as I have long since thought, and often openly said. For although the Meeting spent near ten days in attending to the subject, and using its "*earnest endeavours to reconcile the difference*," as Gough informs us, Vol. iii. p. 383. "Keith seeming predetermined, either for carrying every thing his own way, or for a separation, eluded all endeavours for reconciliation and peace." What was it that Keith wanted? That an epistle of Thomas Ellwood's, which had been "submitted to the second day's morning meeting," and approved "*in a full Meeting*," should "*be called in*," that is, suppressed. Could any thing be more unreasonable than such conduct? And especially towards those, who appear to have been willing to extend towards him, on principles of Christian charity and forbearance, *a liberal toleration of the rights of private judgment*.

George Keith was not satisfied with this, but attempted to impose upon the next Yearly Meeting a number of articles of faith, as fit conditions of Christian fellowship, *which they very properly refused to sanction*, and declared "*that whilst he is in an unreconciled and uncharitable state, he ought not to preach or pray in any of Friends' meetings, nor to be owned or received as one of us*." Ibid, p. 386.

If this be a true picture of the manner in which our predecessors acted at that time, as I gather from the united testimony of Sewel and Gough, is it not, I intreat you to consider, highly deserving our commendation, and worthy the imitation of their succes-

sors in religious profession, in order that we might follow them, *as they therein followed the precepts and example of Christ?*

To proceed to a brief review of the passage you have selected from Sewel's history, for my consideration. It refers to no less than thirty-six texts, as the authority on which it is founded, all of which I have examined, and of these there are but three, Rom. ix. 5. 1 John v. 7. and v. 20, which I consider liable to any objection of consequence, as being erroneously rendered in the received version.

To the scriptural truth and soundness of the rest I assent, and I may add, that the meaning of the sacred writers appears to me, generally to be stated *with much greater precision and clearness in the text*, than in the comment. Yet I could readily select much from the latter, which I think is well, and happily expressed. But I do not incline to descend to particulars; to do this in any satisfactory manner to myself, would occupy more of my time, and of yours, than I imagine would be useful on this occasion.

Your next reference is to the "Summary of the History, Doctrine, and Discipline of Friends," ch. 11, on *Doctrine*. The first division of which subject, is styled, in the head to the chapter, "*General Belief*." The identical words which were inserted in the minute, respecting your accusation, but which were afterwards omitted, and the word "*principles*," inserted in their room.

I have, however, a few observations to make, on the use of those terms. They may have been selected to intimate, that the reader could not reasonably expect, any very particular or minute information, *in a Summary*. Or, they may have been used, to point out the honourable analogy, which is observable between *the primitive Christian church*, and

ours, inasmuch as creeds and formularies of faith, *were never enjoined in either*, general as the practice has for many years been, among most professors of Christianity. I may therefore surely say, it peculiarly behoves a church, which has never thought fit to establish a creed, to be very tolerant towards its members, and even to encourage them in the free, but temperate exercise of the rights of private judgment in matters of religion, *that their faith may be founded on individual conviction, and not on a slavish implicit submission to the authority of others.*

To the first paragraph of this chapter, I have no objection. It says, "We agree with other professors of the Christian name, in the belief of ONE ETERNAL GOD, the CREATOR AND PRESERVER OF THE UNIVERSE; and in *Jesus Christ his Son*, the *Messiah*, and *mediator of the new covenant.*" How strictly accordant is this, with the fundamental principles of that Book Society, for being a subscriber to which, I am now accused of holding opinions contrary to the principles of the Society?

The preference which the next paragraph expresses, for "the use of such terms as we find in scripture—when we speak of the gracious display of *the love of God to mankind,*" in all the particulars mentioned therein, concerning our Saviour, meets my cordial approbation. We ought, I also agree, to be not only "*contented with,*" but *deeply thankful for,* "that knowledge which divine wisdom hath seen meet to reveal." That is, as I suppose, the connexion of the words requires "*in scripture,*" just before spoken of.

As to not attempting "to explain those mysteries, which remain under the veil," I am not sure that I clearly apprehend the intent of the writer. If it means, that we should not attempt to explain such matters, as it has pleased *divine wisdom* to place out

of the reach of his rational offspring, as opposed to "that knowledge which divine wisdom hath seen meet to reveal," I perfectly agree with the writer, that such attempts are much better let alone. They will assuredly prove vain, and fruitless, and may indicate folly, or presumption. The above passage seems to imply, and the same thing is much more plainly asserted in the scriptures, that certain mysteries which were unknown, or "*under the veil*," before the promulgation of Christianity, *are so no longer*; that is, they were then made known, and ceased to be mysteries. "The secret things belong unto the *Lord our God*: but those things which are revealed unto us, and to our children." The author of the Summary, describes the prudence of the Society of Friends, respecting this point, in the following terms, connecting another subject with it, not in the most lucid manner: "*We attempt not*," says he, "to explain those mysteries, which remain under the veil; nevertheless we acknowledge, and assert the divinity of Christ, who is the wisdom and power of God unto salvation."

Is it not singular, that *in this paragraph*, the writer of which professes to prefer scriptural terms, before all others, that he should have adopted two or three within so small a compass, which are not to be found in the scriptures? At least not in the received version.

The advantages of strictly adhering to the language of the sacred writers, on all points of faith, *are very great*. We have then, better security, against having unscriptural notions imposed upon us, for Christian truths. If any question arises, about the true meaning of any term, we may refer to the text, and that will often tend to throw important light, *upon its real import*, by carefully marking the general drift of the passage, where it occurs.

Whereas, by using unscriptural terms, we are wholly deprived of these means of distinguishing *truth*, from *error*. In such cases, what is to be done? We may, it is true, enquire, in what sense such terms are used by the best writers of our own country. Or, we may look into their derivation from other languages. It may be found, that the same term has been used in one age, in one sense, and in a subsequent age, in another.

These sources of error may be avoided, by adhering to the language of scripture, in which I know not, that the term "*divinity*," is ever applied to Christ, or that it even occurs any where in those writings. Does not then the use of it look like a vain attempt, to be wise above what is written? However this may be, as the term is not to be found in the scriptures, it is obvious we must seek its true import elsewhere.

To whom shall we apply? It must needs be, to some fallible authority. In this dilemma, how are we to proceed? We may attend to the reasons assigned in favour of any opinion we might obtain, and adopt it so far as those reasons appear to us to warrant our concurrence. On these grounds I submit to your consideration, the following exposition of the term "*divinity*," by an author who did not write much, but whose style is remarkable for perspicuity, and a correct use of words.

"I have hitherto," says Paul Cardale, "been endeavouring to set the doctrine of the New Testament, concerning Jesus Christ, which I think has been generally misunderstood, in its true and proper light. If any then, should surmise, that I intend to depreciate our Lord's character, or to *deny his divinity*, I answer in the negative, and that I have been doing the greatest justice to it, by going as far as the scripture leads me.

“Of the *deity* of the FATHER, and of the *divinity* of the Son, I have very different ideas. *Divinity* and *humanity* may unite, and very well agree to one, and the same individual person; but not *godhead* and *manhood*. This is agreeable to my conceptions. The word *divinity*, does not always necessarily convey an idea of *the one God*, or of *the supreme Deity*; but is rather to be understood of those gifts and endowments of any kind, which proceed from *the Deity*, and in which, we may be said to imitate, or resemble, *the one God*; and accordingly, it is often applied to men of distinguished worth and excellence, for their superior knowledge, wisdom, piety, and great abilities, or to such as were θεοπνεστοι *divinely illuminated*. Thus it is used in various languages, and by various writers. And this divinity, is eminently ascribed to the man Christ Jesus. He was, *truly speaking, a divine person*. Grace was poured into his lips, and he spake as never man spake. (Psalms, xiv. 2. John vii. 46. Luke iv. 22.) The spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he was replenished with all the divine gifts. In this light we justly reverence his *divine character*, and are called to pay all *due honour to him*, as the person *whom his Father hath honoured*, and to whom he hath given a name above every name.

“To say, therefore, as some have done,” [but never that I have noticed any approved writer in our Society,] “that the *godhead of the Father*, dwelt *personally* in the man Christ Jesus, or that *God and man* were *so united*, as to form one *complex person*, or one *intellectual, compound being*, is very absurd, as well as altogether unscriptural. ‘His infinitude and immensity forbid the thought, that he should ever assume any human soul and body, into a personal union with himself. And *this* is the express declared sentiment of that very Being, with whom he is said to be *in personal union*.’ ‘I come, says

he, not to do *my own will*, but the will of *him that sent me*. Not *my will*, but *thine be done*.' ” Doctrine of the New Testament, &c. p. 230—232.

As to your quotations and references, to passages in the Yearly Meeting Epistles, after attentively reading those passages, I am unable to discover, how any of them can apply to the points at issue between us, or upon what intelligible principle the selection was made. I know not, that I ever objected to more than two of those passages, and that, on account of their being incorrect quotations from scripture, viz. the last paragraphs in the Epistles, for 1758, and 1759.

The paper you left with me, No. 2, (inserted p. 92, 93,) whatever other merits it may have, is not, I think, at all pertinent to the occasion. It was intended to give me your united judgment, whether you understood that *divinity* was ascribed, according to the doctrines of our Society, to the *man Christ Jesus*, or to that divine power *which dwelt in, and acted by him*? Instead of giving me any clear answer to this plain question, you say---“ We here mean the *spiritual body of Christ*, which he told the Jews except *they partook of*, they had *no life in them*.”

What is that to the purpose, excepting so far as the use of this highly figurative language, may serve to render your meaning obscure to others, if not to yourselves also? The first part of this phraseology seems to be borrowed from Barclay’s 5th and 6th Prop. § 13, the latter part of it, from John vi. 53. As to Barclay’s use of those terms, or those with which he begins this section, it may suffice to shew, (without going into an irrelevant enquiry, what he did mean by them,) in what sense he himself declares, *he did not use them*, nor, according to his testimony, *did those with whom he was joined in religious fellowship*. He says, “ By this seed, grace, and word of God, and light, wherewith, we say, every

one is enlightened—we *understand not, the proper essence and nature of God, precisely taken*; which is not divisible into parts, or measures, as being a *most pure, simple Being*, void of all composition, or division, and therefore can neither be resisted, hurt, wounded, crucified, or slain, by all the efforts and strength of men.”

Having thus disclaimed the use of such like expressions, as speaking of “*the proper essence and nature of God, precisely taken*,” and thereby very properly guarding himself against being misunderstood, he adds,—

“But we understand a spiritual, heavenly, and invisible principle, in which GOD, *as Father, Son, and Spirit, dwells*; a measure of which divine and glorious life, *is in all men*, as a seed, which of its own nature draws, invites, and inclines to GOD; and this some call *vehiculum Dei*, or the *spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ*, which came down from heaven; *of which all the saints do feed*, and are thereby nourished *unto eternal life*.”

Hence it seems evident, that by the terms, “*the spiritual body of Christ*,” Barclay did not mean to designate that “*most pure, simple Being*,” whom he designates, Prop. 2, § 5, “*the infinite and most wise God, who is the foundation, root, and spring of all operation*.”

By referring to the 2nd section, of the 13th Prop. you may find the same argument much enlarged upon, and expressly extended to that typical “*spiritual rock*,” of which you next speak.

How far the following subject is judiciously connected by you, with the foregoing, I shall refer to your reconsideration. It relates to the introduction of the gospel, according to John the evangelist, on which I submit to you the following brief commentary of an able defender of Christianity.

“*In the beginning was the word. By beginning, I*

think cannot be intended the beginning of the gospel, but of the creation, or rather always, from eternity *was the word*. *And the word was with God*; that is, was always with God, though not fully manifested, till these last days of the world. *And the word was God*; which sometimes has been rendered thus, *And God was the word*.—I am of opinion, that God here, is the same God that was mentioned before. St John useth a gradation. First he says, *the word was always*, before all time. Then he adds, *and was with God*: and lastly, that he *was God* himself. What follows, confirms this interpretation; v. 3 *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*. Who should this be, but God the Father, the one living and true God, and author of life and all being? Are there more creators than one? Would any Jew, or disciple of Jesus, ascribe the creation of the world to any but God, or his reason, or understanding, or discretion, his wisdom, his power, his word, his spirit, which is the same as God himself? v. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him*. This needs no comment. v. 11. *He came to his own, and his own received him not*. I pray, whose people were the Jews' but God's; his, who styled himself Jehovah? He now came in Jesus, to his own people: but they received him not. St. John, therefore, intends the one true God, not any inferior deity." Lardner, on the Logos, p. 23, 24, 25. Unitarian Tracts, Vol. VI.

As to your allusion to John i. 14. I have no objection to it, at least not to the text, *correctly rendered*. And I perfectly agree with you, that the many miracles which Christ wrought on earth, are to be ascribed to the *power of the Father within him*. Such I take to be your meaning, though it is somewhat obscurely expressed. Yet I cannot think it was this power "which was accused by the Jews,"

but "*the man Christ Jesus.*" See Matt. xxvii. 12. Mark xv. 2. Luke xxiii. 10. and John xviii. 29. 30. The same *true and real man in soul and body*, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and raised up again *by the glorious power of the Father.* See Rom. vi. 4.

You say, speaking of "*the spiritual body of Christ,*" whose "*outward body* suffered death, but was raised up again the third day, *which,*" that is, in strict grammatical construction, which *outward body*, "*ascended up far above all heavens, filling all things, and upholding all things by the word of his power.*" This surely cannot have been your meaning: [which, on reading this passage, the committee acknowledged] and if so, I added, the consciousness of your own fallibility in this, and other instances, while sitting in judgment on the supposed theological errors of a fellow professor of faith in Christ Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, should make you sensibly feel, the need there is for the extension of mutual toleration, if you really think it desirable to preserve "*the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*"

In this paper you have very confusedly put together, a portion of five *very important texts of scripture*, interlarding them *with matter of your own*, without giving any reference to either, or in any manner distinguishing your additions and alterations, from the language of the *sacred writers.* The texts you have thus treated, are, Eph. iv. 10. Heb. i. 3.—x. 14. 1 Pet. i. 2. and Heb. ix. 28. Pray look at these texts, and the context of each attentively, and then decide for yourselves how far you have given in this paper, the real sense of those passages. They are much too important to be passed over in silence, as you have thus presented them to my notice.

The first, is thus rendered in the received version. "He [Christ] that descended, is the same that as-

cended up far above all heavens, that he might fill," (or as the margin has it) "*fulfil all things.*" It is not *very material*, which is the true reading ; as the intent of the apostle is so well explained in the six following verses. His argument in the ninth and tenth verses, is so perspicuously stated by John Locke in the latter part of a most judicious note on this passage, that I cannot forbear quoting it. He states it to be, " That Christ, the *same Jesus that died*, and was laid in his grave, was exalted *to the right hand of God*, above all the heavens, in the highest state of dignity and power ; that *he himself*, being filled with the *fulness of God*, believers, who were all his members, might receive immediately from him, their head, a fulness of gifts and graces, upon no other terms, but barely as they were his members." See also Locke's paraphrase on the whole chapter, and Fox's Doctrinals, p. 430.

Whatever may be the true meaning of the words you have selected from Heb. i. 3. viz. that which was present to the mind of the sacred penman, when he wrote that passage, it may, I should think, be safely inferred, that it ought to be so understood as to be consistent with the two preceding verses, and that which follows. By the former we are assured that " God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath, in these last days spoken unto us, by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." By the latter verse it appears, that the person so appointed, was "*made* so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they." Is not this plainly to describe the power of the *Son*, however great and glorious, as *delegated* and *conferred*, not as *original* and *underrived*.

The real import of the next text you have quoted a part of, with a needless addition of your own, is

so obvious by only prefixing the two preceding verses to it, as to render any comment unnecessary.—Viz. “But *this man*, (*Jesus Christ*,) after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. From henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever, them that are sanctified.” Rom. x. 12. 13. 14.

Your next selection seems to have been made from 1 Pet. i. 2. but not very correctly. The three first verses of which chapter, contain so just, accurate, clear and comprehensive a view of the nature of the gospel dispensation, as to need no illustration. To which, as well comporting therewith, I shall add the last text cited in your paper, but more correctly than you have quoted it.—Viz.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of GOD THE FATHER, through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be THE GOD and FATHER of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. And unto them that look for him shall he appear the *second time without sin unto salvation*.” Heb. ix. 28.

As to your first list of references to texts of Scripture, in the paper you gave me, No III. [inserted in p. 155.] I have only to say, that till I know in what sense you therein use the term “*omnipotence*,” I cannot so well speak to your view of the subject. As to mine, they appear, on examining all the texts referred to, entirely inapplicable.

Of the other list of references in the same paper to eleven texts, there are three which have been long

considered by the ablest biblical critics, to be erroneously rendered in the received version ; viz. Acts xx. 28. Rom. ix. 5. and 1 Tim. iii. 16. Nor do any of the others seem relevant to the professed object of the selection. The term “godhead,” I think, occurs in the Scriptures but three times ; viz. Acts xvii. 29. Rom. i. 20. and Col. ii. 9. In the two first texts it is expressly applied *to God*, and not *to Christ*. And in the latter, the in-dwelling of the fulness, or the spirit of God in Christ, is alone asserted. “For in him dwelleth, *all the fulness of the godhead bodily*,” that is, *really and substantially*, as his divine sayings and mighty works evinced in the most signal and conspicuous manner. You have not noticed either of these texts ; and that most of those you have referred to, are not to the purpose for which you have adduced them, is, I think, plain from the passages themselves, or their immediate context.

For instance, when Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one*,” can his meaning be at all dubious, when he had just before declared, as recorded in the preceding verse, “*My Father is greater than all* ?” As to the three verses you have adduced from the 17th chapter of John, verses 11. 21. 22. I wish you to consider seriously, and attentively, whether they do not all imply, that the disciples of Christ may be one, *as he and his Father are one* ? In the first of these verses, Christ is said to have prayed to THE FATHER, “that they may be one, *as we are*.” In the second, “that they may be one, as thou FATHER art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” And in the third, “that they may be one, even as we are one.” That is, in like manner, although not in the like degree. You do not, I suppose, infer from these texts, that the unity of Christ’s disciples here spoken of, *however perfect*, was to be a *personal union* ? But rather a oneness of faith in the Son of God,

“that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know, that thou, (*Father*) *hast sent me,*” says Christ, “and hast loved them, *as thou hast loved me.*” v. 23.

Before you referred to 1 Tim. ii. 3. for such a purpose, you should, I think, have looked two verses lower down, where you might have seen of whom the apostle spoke in the third verse, and how clearly he distinguishes the “ONE GOD,” or “GOD OUR SAVIOUR,” from the “*one mediator between GOD and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

To the general pertinency of your selection of texts in the paper, (No. 4. for which see p. 155,) in order to prove that Jesus Christ is “worthy of glory, honour, dominion and praise,” I fully agree; and also that a much more copious list of appropriate and authentic texts might easily be adduced in support of that conclusion. But how you could imagine, the introduction of that paper at all relevant to any question that has ever been agitated between us, or how it can apply to any “*opinions*” I have “*imbibed,*” or “*aided in propagating,*” I am wholly at a loss to conjecture. Nevertheless, as said the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 3. “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; *and the head of Christ is GOD.*”

On reading the foregoing extracts from Lardner’s Letter on the Logos, p. 163—4, Henry Knight observed, that no notice was taken of that verse, which said the word was made flesh. On which I reminded the committee of my offer to lend them the work, to look over at their leisure. Had they accepted it, they might have seen the author had not passed it over in silence, and with their leave I would read to them Lardner’s remarks on that text, which I did as follows:—

“*And the word was made flesh,* and dwelt among us: that is, as before shewn. ‘And the word was

made man, or took upon him the human nature.⁷ *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* That is, And we beheld in Jesus such power, and wisdom, that we could not doubt his being the Messiah.

“That St. John intends the Lord Jesus, is evident from what he adds in the 15th verse. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he, of whom I spake. He that cometh after me, is preferred before me.

“*And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* This is the same, which, in other words, is said in divers texts of the New Testament. Matt. i. 20, 23. And she shall bring forth a Son. And thou shalt call his name Jesus. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son. And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, God with us. And John iii. 34, 35. For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God. For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. Col. i. 19. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. And chap. ii. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And ver. 19. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. As before hinted, it was not *the word*, which St. John and others beheld, but Jesus, in whom the word dwelled. Him they beheld. And his greatness was conspicuous: so that he appeared, and they knew him, to be, the only begotten of the Father, or the Messiah.” p. 27, 28.

Having read the above extract, the [Monthly

Meeting's] committee observed, *they had no objection to make to those passages.* And to my observations on their *M. S.* papers, they made very little comment of any sort, so that they left me to my own conjectures, how far they were satisfactory to them, or otherwise.

When the foregoing extract from Paul Cardale's True Doctrine of the New Testament, concerning Jesus Christ, was reading, to the Quarterly Meeting's committee, Luke Howard enquired, whether I meant to imply unqualified approbation of that work, from the terms in which I had spoken of it, which he thought *nearly imported as much.* I told him, I did not intend so to express myself, *and thought I had not,* that I was not accustomed to declare unqualified approbation so much in the lump.

When I had nearly finished reading the extract from that work, concerning the proper import of the term "*divinity*," p. 160—162, he enquired, very earnestly, whether the passage contained an accurate statement of my sentiments, or whether I was only amusing them with a theological lecture? He thought it was important to ascertain this point, and that the committee had a right to know, in which light I laid it before them, as, if those were my sentiments, as he supposed, by the manner in which the extract was introduced, they might materially affect the committee's decision. It was their business to discover, whether I held such opinions, as I was charged with having imbibed, or not?

I told the committee, it appeared to me, that the passage was sound and scriptural, but that the point at issue between the respondents and myself was not, whether in replying to their accusations I might express myself incautiously, or unguardedly, but whether the ground on which I was accused, before the Monthly Meeting, *justified my disownment.* Nor could I imagine, it was within their province, as judges of my appeal, to decide upon such evidence,

as I brought forward in my defence, unless so far as that evidence was in my favour. The other side of the question ought, in equity and justice, to be wholly made out by the respondents. I assured the committee, if I had supposed they could have thought of making such a use of any part of my defence, they should never have heard one line of my minutes.

I adduced them because I thought it the most candid way of laying before the committee, the manner in which I had been treated. But I looked to them, to decide between the respondents and myself, not on any subsequent errors, into which I might have been betrayed in replying to their charges, but on such previous errors, as it was in their power to prove, I had imbibed, and aided in propagating, and that upon the two specific points on which I was accused; *and on those only*. To the introduction of any other, I had all along objected, as unreasonable, inquisitorial, and unjust. The length of the discussion had arisen from this conduct of the respondents; it would otherwise, comparatively, have laid in a nut-shell.

Two or three of the committee observed, that what Luke Howard had said, was only to be considered as his sentiments, and not those of the committee, and about the same number seemed to approve them. The committee adjourned to the next day, at three in the afternoon, to meet at Devonshire House.

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE,

11th Month, 4th, 1812. Fourth Sitting.

Sixteen of the Committee present.

When I was called upon to proceed with my defence, I observed, that I felt considerable hesitation in proceeding farther in the course I had already

pursued, but as I had laid before the committee, my minutes of the three first conferences with the Monthly Meeting's committee, and those of the last conference were comparatively short, I thought it might be as well to read those also.

The committee expressing their readiness to hear, whatever I might incline to lay before them, I read my minutes of that conference, Feb. 18th, 1812, from which I shall lay before the reader, the following extracts:

After a short pause, John Harris said, the object of their visit was very similar to the former, which was to know, whether any thing they had said, had induced me to alter my sentiments?

I replied, that I was much surprised at their putting such a question to me, as it appeared to imply an almost total forgetfulness of what passed at our last conference. That I was unable to recal to my recollection, one argument they had used at all likely to produce a change of sentiment, in any rational mind. If they recollected any, which appeared to them calculated to produce such any effect, I requested they would mention what they were.

This they declining to do, I told them, that putting such a question to me, at the commencement of our conference, shewed the necessity of reviewing what occurred at their last visit. For this purpose, I proposed reading, not the papers I then read, but the minutes I made of the verbal conferences between us, respecting them. They objected to my doing this, and I did not urge it, observing, it appeared to me almost hopeless, to expect that we should by any farther conferences, come to a mutual understanding of each others sentiments. I was well persuaded, they did not understand mine, and I certainly did not theirs.

They replied, they thought they did understand mine, and Richard Bowman asserted, the reason

why I did not understand theirs, was because I would not!

I assured them, that was not the case, and requested to be informed, what replies they had to give to the queries I submitted to them, in writing, at our last conference? To which they answered, the only reply we have to give, is, to refer thee to the papers *we before left with thee*.

Those papers, I replied, I thought you were convinced, at our last conference, were mostly irrelevant to the professed purposes for which they were drawn up, and they contain, in my mind, ample proof that you do not clearly understand the subjects, you have undertaken to discuss. I am quite willing, if you are, to rest the matters at issue between us, to the constitutional judges of your conduct, and mine, upon those papers, and the written replies to them which you have heard. These replies they asserted, were, for the most part, not to the purpose, being chiefly made up of extraneous matter, very improperly introduced. Whether they were, or not, I told them, I was willing should be decided by any competent judges, whose province it might become, to determine between us.

After this, one of the committee adverted to my being a member of the London Unitarian Book Society, observing, that the first book in the catalogue, annexed to its Book of Rules, *was calculated to subvert the principal truths of the Christian religion*.

I did not, at first, understand what work they referred to, but I at length found it was the Improved Version of the New Testament! The first ground they alleged for this heavy charge, was the general tenor of the notes on the first chapters of Matthew and Luke, respecting the narratives of the miraculous conception of Christ. To which they added, that those notes were also intended to invalidate the doc-

trines of the pre-existence and eternal divinity of Christ.

They then proceeded to interrogate me as to my belief in those tenets, repeating part of the first verses of the gospel, according to John, by way of explaining what they meant, by the latter doctrines. I told them, I believed the truth of the text, but reminded them, with a degree of warmth, which they deemed improper, and unbecoming the occasion, of their repeated attempts to put such sort of ensnaring questions to me, and of my positive and repeated refusal to answer them. That it was to aim at the exercise of a power, which no rule of the Yearly Meeting warranted, and that even if there were such a rule, it would be more honoured in the breach, than the observance. That their sentiments, in regard to Christian liberty, and the rights of private judgment, were widely different from mine, and that, from such acquaintance as I had with ecclesiastical history, within the boundaries of the more limited powers they possessed, their claims to the exercise of an inquisitorial jurisdiction, appeared to me, very similar to that which the Romish church authorised, during the darkest ages it had ever known,

The committee denied the justice of this comparison, but without pointing out in what respects it was inapplicable, and observed, that unless I would answer the questions they put to me, their visit was not likely to answer any good purpose!

I replied, they should adduce any evidence they had it in their power to bring forward against me, as I had repeatedly told them, and not rely for evidence, as they had done all along, on the answers I might give, to their insidious, and inquisitorial enquiries.

Samuel Marsh said, it was evident, their sentiments and mine, were widely different, *as I had acknowledged*. On which I reminded him of the im-

port of my words, I had said no such thing in reference to matters of doctrine, respecting which, I thought we did not rightly understand each other, but with regard to the proper boundaries of Christian liberty, and the rights of private judgment, we did indeed differ very widely in our opinions. John Harris admitted, that my observations, to which Samuel Marsh had referred, were distinctly applied, as I stated.

Richard Bowman remarked, it was plain *I refused to be catechised by them*. I answered, I shall persist in such refusal.

Notwithstanding this, they once more questioned me, whether I was not the author of the work signed Verax, which they asserted had a tendency to subvert most of the principles of the Society of Friends!

I told them, my refusal to say, whether I was, or not, arose from no fear of any charge they could bring against me, on this account, if they knew I had written those works, but because it was a subject not referred to their care. And as they had several times before, adverted to my conduct, respecting Hannah Barnard, I would shew them a quarto volume in *M.S.* containing my correspondence with Frederick Smith, on that subject, which took place near ten years ago, and this would shew, that I had by no means shrunk from enquiry into it, at that time. Nor should I now, if it was regularly brought forward. I transcribed the said correspondence, and had the same bound, for the information of any Friends, who might wish to see it. They looked over some pages of the *M. S.* but made no remarks.

The committee expressed a desire to break up the conference, as I refused to answer their questions, although I had put so many to them. And

Richard Bowman said, *I had furnished them with nothing else but questions.*

I replied, it was true I had put a number of questions to them, arising out of their accusations, very few of which, they had even attempted to answer, nor did I think, they had given me a clear explicit answer, even to one.

Richard Bowman observed, that was, as I thought, *they thought differently.* Before they left me, I told them, I would submit to their consideration, the following dilemma, in order to extricate myself from which, I requested their assistance.

At the first conference I had with Henry Knight, he asserted, as related in p. 2, that 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16, represents Christ, "as the blessed and only Potentate,—who only hath immortality." I told him, it was evident to me, that the apostle applied those terms to *God*, and not to Christ. I was aware, at that time, that the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1760, asserts the same thing, but I shall scarcely ever forget, whilst the faculty of memory lasts, the astonishment I felt, on first reading the passage, last spring. I had long been conversant with the Epistles to 1759, in which, I am fully persuaded, nothing of the kind can be found.

The assertion, that Christ is so styled in the scriptures, is either true or false, which any person, who has access to the text, may examine and judge of, for himself. This is the mode I should prefer, in all such cases, but to meet you, on your own principles, as I have since discovered, what I consider, a sound and scriptural exposition of this text, by one of our approved authors, I wish to know, which you think I ought to receive, as the true construction, that of the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1760, contrary to my own conscience and judgment, or Joseph Besse's excellent "*Doxology*," as it appears to me, being the concluding paragraph

of his two folio volumes, of the sufferings of the people called Quakers, published in 1753, *which accords with both*, and is as follows:

“To the Lord, **OUR GOD**, who *only hath immortality*, and dwelleth in the light, the inexhaustible Fountain of all power, and knowledge, who giveth strength to the weak, and understanding to the simple, from whom *alone*, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and Redeemer, proceedeth *all* our ability for the performance of *every* good work, *be all glory, praise, thanksgiving, and dominion*, rendered and ascribed; now, henceforth, and through all generations. Amen.”

The committee declined saying, which construction of the text, they thought it right for me to receive, under these circumstances. But Samuel Marsh said, it was clear I did not understand it, as the Yearly Meeting had done. This I readily granted. Henry Knight observed, that the chief difference between us, was, that Friends made no distinction between *the Son*, and *the Father*, but considered them as the same Being, or Person, whereas, the Unitarians, did make a distinction between them. I replied, that was manifestly to represent the Society as holding, what was usually called, *Sabellianism*. Soon after this, the committee departed, without proposing another conference.

When I had read the minutes of my last conference with the Monthly Meeting's committee, I adverted to the discussion which my quotation from Paul Cardale, occasioned yesterday evening. On this I had written a letter to the committee, which, with their permission, I would read in the presence of the respondents, and then put it into their hands for consideration.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE QUARTERLY
MEETING,

On the Appeal of Thomas Foster.

Dear Friends,

From the very unexpected declaration, several of you made, on my reading to you, yesterday evening, an extract from Paul Cardale's "True Doctrine of the New Testament, concerning Jesus Christ," I am, on subsequent reflection thereon, satisfied with the propriety, and necessity, of my explicitly informing you, that in conformity to the terms of your own proposing, that I should be at liberty to draw a pencil mark through any part of my minutes, left in your hands for perusal, that on deliberate consideration, I did not chuse to stand, as part of my defence; I hereby, with all due deference and respect, give you notice, to consider me as having so done, with regard to every part of such minutes, as may not, in your judgment, contribute to my defence. They were only intended for that purpose, and cannot, I conceive, be equitably applied to any other. I have no objection to the respondents making out as strong a case against me, as may be in their power, relative to the publicity I have given to the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, and to my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, the only charges alleged against me, to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, and on which only were the committee, whose report is before you, appointed to visit me. On these points, you will not find me backward, in giving you every reasonable information you may require, but I do object to entering upon any other topics, after what has passed, at least, upon interrogatories, for it would be, in my mind, to deprive you so far, of the honourable character of judges of an appeal, and in the same proportion, ren-

der you a court of inquisition, to which I should be unwilling to contribute, full as much from the real regard I feel for your reputation, and that of the Society, as from any personal considerations that relate to myself.

I am, respectfully, your sincere, well-wishing friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Bromley, Nov. 4th, 1812.

When my letter had been read, the respondents and myself, with Thomas Compton, who kindly accompanied me, were requested to withdraw. On our being again admitted, Luke Howard informed me that he considered himself alone accountable for the expressions to which I had alluded in my letter. The committee had not confirmed them by any decision of theirs, but *disapproved them*. He wished me to re-state what I understood he did say, and what other members of the committee, had expressed themselves to the same effect.

I replied, I understood he said that it was of much importance to ascertain whether that quotation were intended by me to be understood as containing my sentiments ; as, if it were, it might materially affect the ultimate judgment of the committee ; with which I understood one or two others of the committee had expressed their concurrence. And one of them to have extended the same inference *to all the quotations I had introduced*. That, being near-sighted, I could not say which of the committee did speak to that effect ; but at length it was admitted that William Forster had so expressed himself.

Luke Howard represented that he had not said it might *materially affect*, but that it would *necessarily enter into their consideration, in deciding, to the best of their judgment, between the parties*. And he hoped I should be quite satisfied, as the committee *disap-*

proved the sentiment, and censured him for expressing it. In another part of my letter, he thought a circumstance was not quite correctly stated. It related to the proposal which had been made on two several occasions, for me to draw a pencil-mark through certain parts of such papers as I left with them for perusal.

I admitted having imputed to him the use of the words he disclaimed, recollecting on his mentioning them, that the words he used were such as he now stated. Yet I trusted the committee would give me credit, for not intentionally misrepresenting any thing they or the respondents said. No person of common sense, standing in such a situation as I did, before so many witnesses of what passed, could venture upon wilful misrepresentation, provided he was destitute of any principle of integrity to restrain him from so doing. I well recollected the two occasions he mentioned; but those were not the proposal to which my letter referred. That was made very soon after I commenced reading my minutes, and I understood it to be such as I had stated in my letter.

John Eliot, Jun. very candidly observed, that he recollected the proposal to which I alluded, and the only misapprehension concerning it appeared to be, that the committee meant those pencil-marks should be drawn through such parts of my papers as I did not read to the committee; whereas, I understood it extended to such as I might have read, and afterwards wished to withdraw, as part of my defence.

I told the committee I so understood their proposal, but that my letter would shew, I did not suppose them to have come to any decision, as a committee, on the sentiment of Luke Howard's, which induced me to write it. That I was so fully impressed with the danger of misconceiving each other's sentiments, *upon points of speculative belief*, owing to the ambiguity or imperfection of language, and

the inaccurate use of it, that I had always, as the respondents knew, attributed much of the apparent contrariety of sentiment between us, on those points, to that fruitful source of dissention. That I considered them as arising much more from grammatical errors, in the use of words, than from any substantial difference of opinion, upon points of faith.

It should be recollected, that words were only the arbitrary signs of our ideas, and unless the sense in which those words were respectively used by any two parties were accurately ascertained, there was no certainty whatever that such persons rightly understood each other. The respondents knew I had urged this point upon them, from day to day, throughout the whole of our conferences, but to no effect. For they had uniformly resisted every attempt which I made, to induce them to explain the terms they used in their written charges against me.

As to the quotations I had made from the works of the learned and eminently pious Lardner, with whose character, as an able defender of our common Christianity, many of the committee must, I presumed, be well acquainted; or those from the writings of Cardale or of any other person, I did not mean to measure the truth of Scripture doctrine *by such quotations*, but to estimate their truth *by the sacred writings*. That great and benevolent Being, who had called all mankind into existence, had been pleased to bestow upon them, different characters of mind and different powers of perception, with regard to moral and religious truth. Hence had arisen much apparent, and some real contrariety of sentiment on these important subjects, even between wise, good and pious men. But these unavoidable differences of opinion, afforded no just reason, why we should not live together in love and harmony, as became Christian brethren.

A little farther to explain my sentiments on the

matter, I would first suppose a person to have been disowned, in a regular, orderly manner, for openly professing to reject any, or all of the most important tenets of the gospel, and soon after to exhibit the most unequivocal marks of sincere repentance, and, in this state of mind to be injudicious enough, to appeal against such a judgment of a Monthly Meeting. Should such a person clothe himself, as with a garment, with the most orthodox profession of faith that could be imagined, it would not have the weight of a feather, as an argument for setting aside the judgment against which he appealed.

On the other hand, supposing a person to have been disowned on insufficient grounds, or the proceedings against him not to have been accordant with the letter and spirit of the established rules, and the immutable principles of justice. No error he may be subsequently led into, and especially in the course of his defence, however gross, ought in justice to be taken into consideration by his judges, in deciding upon his appeal. They may possibly form good ground for instituting a fresh proceeding; but the judgment ought, in both cases, to rest on the establishment of the original accusation, and the regularity of the proceedings.

I therefore objected to the committee deciding between the respondents and myself, on any other grounds than the two distinct charges exhibited against me to the Monthly Meeting, 12th month, 19th last, as no others whatever were then alleged against me.

I could not readily imagine a more gross violation of justice, than to put a man upon his trial on certain charges, and to adduce against him in the course of a judicial inquiry into these, *fresh matters of accusation*.

Several of the committee expressed their concurrence with this sentiment, and especially John Eliot Jun. On which Richard Bowman observed, he

did not quite understand the proposition, to which several of the committee seemed to accede, in a manner that appeared to imply some censure on the respondents. He therefore requested me to restate the proposition; which I did, saying I had before stated it, as a general principle, which I considered to be sound and obligatory on all persons who sat in judgment. In the soundness of this principle several of the committee had expressed their concurrence, but they had given no opinion whatever, as to its application to the case at issue between the respondents and myself. It was admitted by all who spoke on the subject, that I had stated it correctly.

The respondents being called on by the committee to reply, one of them observed, that a person making minutes of such conferences would be likely to omit some things, and to state others rather more favourably to his own side of the question than they really were. After this general remark, they offered the following pleas in support of their accusation, of the import of which, as they were read, I made minutes.—Viz.

1. They alleged, that I admitted having given encouragement to the Improved Version of the New Testament, and that I had acknowledged I much approved that work.

2. That they believed me to be the author of two works, published under the signature of Verax, as the monthly reviewers had said they supposed me to be writer of those works, and I was mentioned as the author of those, and some other works in favour of Hannah Barnard, in Evans's Sketch, &c.

3. They next read seven passages from Verax's Reply to Vindex, and two from Verax's Christian Unitarianism Vindicated, to shew the committee what passages they objected to in those works. [These I shall quote, hereafter, with the context of

such as do not without it exhibit their import, fairly and fully.]

4. They alleged, that I had distributed some copies of the "Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810, by an Unitarian Christian," without entering my protest against the unsound doctrine which that paper contained.

5. They next objected to a passage in my letter to the overseers, dated Nov. 5th, 1811, respecting those Remarks, as being of dangerous tendency, alleging that the same plea might be urged, with equal reason, in favour of the most licentious and immoral publications. [The passage adduced was the last paragraph in p. 16.]

6. That they had represented how improper they thought it was for me, as a member of the Society of Friends, to have become a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, and to have my name appear in the list of its subscribers, as a member for life.

7. Their next accusation was, that I did not put the same construction on some texts of Scripture, which they did!

8. That in their visits to me, by appointment of the Monthly Meeting, they endeavoured to ascertain, by questioning me, whether I did hold such sentiments as the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and the Preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society contained.

9. That they also questioned me, whether I was not the writer of the works published under the signature of Verax, and as to the encouragement I had given to the "Improved Version of the New Testament."

10. That they should be much concerned if it was to be understood, that overseers, or Meetings for Discipline, should be obliged to sift out evidence,

as it were, in holes and corners, instead of questioning the party supposed to be implicated.

11. That they had endeavoured to convince me, that my conduct and sentiments were inconsistent with my continuing to be a member of the Society of Friends, and with the extracts and references to passages in their writings, which they had adduced.

12. That they thought if my sentiments accorded with the extracts and references they had laid before me, *it was well*. But if they did not, they thought it was not necessary, or their place, to enter into reasoning with me, concerning points of doctrine. It was not likely to answer any good purpose, as I was so conversant with all the texts of Scripture which related to those subjects, they did not expect from the first that they should be able to effect any change in my sentiments. The manner in which I received the little they did offer, they said, discouraged them from saying more. And as I did not seem disposed to make any alteration in my sentiments and conduct, they reported the case to the Monthly Meeting, which made the minute of 2nd month, 20th, 1812.

13. The respondents admitted, that they did not know any rule of the Yearly Meeting, which directly applied to the case of the appellant. But they referred the committee to the following passage in the Preface to the Book of Extracts, p. 5. as justifying their proceedings. "For when any, by their inconsistent and disorderly conduct, or by imbibing and adopting principles and practices, contrary to the doctrine which we have received, have first openly manifested their disunity with the Society, it is but just and requisite that, after endeavouring and waiting to restore them without effect, the body should testify its disunity with such erring and refractory members; at the same time earnestly desiring that they may be convinced of the error of their ways, and that through unfeigned repentance, and a con-

sistent, orderly conduct in future, they may be reunited to the body."

14. That they presumed that the Quarterly Meeting's committee would understand by the terms "*eternal divinity*," as used in their report to the Monthly Meeting, and in the "testimony of denial," that they meant *the godhead of Christ*, which [they said] was disclaimed in the "Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle for 1810," and in the "Preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society."

15. That they had taken considerable pains with me, at their last visit, respecting the encouragement I had given to the Improved Version of the New Testament, beyond purchasing it, of which I had taken very little notice in my minutes of that conference; from whence they inferred, that in my minutes of their other conferences I had omitted equally important parts of what they had laid before me. They also urged, that if there were erroneous passages in the received version, we should not know what to depend upon, and that by making such objections, the whole might be discredited.

16. Lastly.—The respondents objected to the truth of my repeated assertions, that no other specific charges were alleged against me at the Monthly Meeting, 12th month, 19th, 1812, when the overseers first reported the case to the Meeting, than my having been concerned in the dispersion of those Remarks, which found fault with the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society.

When the respondents had concluded, I told the overseers that they had stated to the Meeting, that those two points furnished the evidence, whereon the minute appointing a committee to visit me was founded, and that neither of them had ever before, to my knowledge, called that fact in question. (See p. 37.) And that if, on recollection, they did

not admit this to be the case, I must request permission of the committee to call witnesses to establish the fact, as I deemed it of importance, for the sake of proving, that all their other charges were improperly introduced. Luke Howard replied, I had no occasion to request permission to do so as a favour ; I might demand it as a right.

The committee then adjourned to three the next afternoon.

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE,

11th Month, 5th, 1812. Fifth Sitting.

When I was called on to proceed with my defence, Luke Howard said, that although the committee held it to be their duty to hear all I might wish to offer, if I would for once consider him as my counsel, he could assure me that I should not injure my defence, by compressing the remainder of it, nor had they any wish that I should injure it. I replied, I have carefully looked over my two addresses to the Monthly Meeting, some parts of which relate to the visits I had received from its overseers and committee, and marked those parts as unnecessary to be read, they having heard my minutes of those conferences. And I believe the committee will not think any other part irrelevant, unless those parts may be thought so, which relate to the extraneous charges brought against me by the respondents, during the investigation of the original accusations. Before I proceed farther, I would say, that I had requested by letter, (a copy of which I read) the attendance of William Binns, and Charles Palmer, as evidences what the charges exhibited to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting were, respecting which the respondents and myself could not agree yesterday evening.

I then read the introductory observations of my

written address to Ratcliff Meeting, 2nd Month, 20th, 1812, p. 56, to the end of the third paragraph in p. 58.

I next read the latter part of the 13th Sec. of Barclay's 5th and 6th Prop. both in Latin and English, and then the last par. in p. 73, and from thence to the end of the address; also my minutes of the discussion that took place in the Monthly Meeting, relative to my case on the same day, p. 53—56, and 74—79, and afterwards my address to the next Monthly Meeting, 3rd Month, 19th, last, from p. 80, to p. 92, and from the last par. in p. 95, to p. 105.

The committee being now informed, that William Binns was in waiting, it was proposed, he should be called in. John Harris observed, that he had no doubt but the appellant and themselves, might, by a few minutes conference, by ourselves, settle the matter in question, *as he thought it was, as I had stated.* William Binns, however, was admitted, and informed by the Clerk, of the occasion of his being requested to attend. But just as I was about to enquire, if he recollected what charges were alleged against me by the overseers, in his presence, on 12th Month, 19th last, one of the committee requested all parties to withdraw. When we had withdrawn Richard Bowman enquired, what the matter of fact was, which I wished to ascertain, by the evidence of William Binns, and Charles Palmer; I informed him, it was to know from them, what the charges alleged by the overseers were, on which the minute was founded, appointing a committee to visit me. He replied, that he understood I had asserted, *they had at that time, no thoughts of any other accusation, in their own minds.* I told them, that was a matter I could not judge of, and had only spoken of the charges *they had alleged against me.* The respondents soon agreed, those were the two specific accusations, I had stated, and those only. *And they*

informed the committee, that was the case, on our being called in again, soon after.

I afterwards read the remainder of my minutes, p. 115--126. The committee now enquired, whether the respondents were ready to reply? Richard Bowman said, they should certainly have something to offer in reply. But he thought, they had better have a previous conference, among themselves. It was then proposed, for the committee to adjourn. Before they adjourned, having put my minutes into the hands of the committee, I observed, that although I had made minutes of the respective conferences with the respondents, and they had not, I had no objection to their taking with them the address, which I should have read to the next Monthly Meeting, after that which disowned me, if the Meeting had thought fit to give me a hearing; being the only document, I had laid before the committee, which the respondents had not before heard. The respondents, and several of the committee, acknowledged the candour of this proposal, which the former, *at length*, accepted, and took the paper home with them.

The committee adjourned to 2nd day next, the 9th instant, at 3 in the afternoon.

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE.

11th Month, 9th, 1812. Sixth Sitting.

The respondents being called on to proceed, John Harris read a paper, in reply to my intended address to Ratcliff Meeting; the principal part of which will be noticed hereafter. They also adduced the following passages, from the "Improved Version of New Testament," in order to enable the committee to judge of its contents, after saying, that I had acknowledged, that I much approved that work.

1st. Note on John i. 1. "*And the word was a*

God. ‘Was God.’ Newcome. ‘Jesus received a commission, as a prophet of the most high, and was invested with extraordinary miraculous powers. But in the Jewish phraseology they were called *gods* to whom *the word of God came*. John x. 35. So Moses is declared to be a *god to Pharaoh*. Exod. vii. 1. Some translate the passage, God was the word, *q. d.* it was not so properly *he* that spake to men, as *God that spake to them by him.*’ Cappe. *ibid.*

2nd. v. 2. “*Was in the beginning with God.* Before he entered upon his ministry, he was fully instructed, by intercourse with God, in the nature, and extent, of his commission.

3rd. v. 11. “*He came to his own, &c.* Mr. Cappe’s version is, ‘He came into his own country, and his countrymen received him not.’ This is no doubt the true meaning, but the evangelist’s elliptical phraseology, seems more eligible in a literal translation.

4th. Note on ver. 14. “*And the word was flesh.* Or, nevertheless, the word was flesh. ‘Though this first preacher of the gospel, was honoured with such signal tokens of divine confidence and favour, though he was invested with so high an office, he was, nevertheless, a *mortal man.*’ Cappe.” [Do the respondents mean to deny that Christ died?]

After reading these notes from the Improved Version, the respondents stated, rather more fully than before, what they called their authorities, for believing me to be the author of several tracts, published under the signature of Verax. These were,

1st. The following passage from the Monthly Review, for Dec. 1810—“And we are told by the writer of the Narrative, (of the Proceedings in America, of the Society called Quakers, in the case of Hannah Barnard,) who is, we suppose, Mr. Thomas Foster, of Bromley.”

2nd. That in Evans's Sketch of the Denominations of the Christian World, 12th edit. 1811. p. 169. Thomas Foster is mentioned as having written "An Appeal to the Society of Friends, with a Sequel, and a Vindication of Scriptural Unitarianism, in reply to Vindex, and Christian Unitarianism, vindicated," in reply to John Bevans, Jun. The two last of those works, they observed, *were published under the signature of Verax.*

The respondents having concluded, I observed, that I did not deny being the author of those pamphlets, but considered that accusation irrelevant, and improper. Yet I had no wish to trouble the committee, with any discussion of that subject, if the respondents were willing to withdraw that part of their charges against me. This they declining, I told the committee, that several of the extracts the respondents had read at the last sitting, were very partially made. I should, therefore, be obliged to read so much of the context, as I thought necessary, to exhibit the sense fairly and fully.

Their 1st quotation for the purpose of criminating Verax, is from p. iv. v. of the Introduction to his Reply to Vindex; being the 2nd paragraph of the following passage: the others are added to exhibit its true import, as I read them to the committee. Viz.

"That I consider our early Friends, to have been generally Unitarians, I readily admit; and notwithstanding there is considerable ambiguity in their writings, the scale of evidence has always appeared to me to preponderate decidedly in favour of that opinion. They were no doubt, as even Vindex allows William Penn to have been at all times, 'deeply impressed with the importance of holding up the doctrine of the complete unity of the Deity.' The consistent acknowledgement, and reverent belief, of this truly scriptural and primitive doctrine, is pure and simple Unitarianism. It is in this sense

only I have used the phrase, as descriptive of the sentiments of our early Friends.

“ That they denied ‘ the eternal divinity of Christ,’ in the sense in which they used those terms, I am so far from having asserted, that I have given some of the strongest of their expressions, in favour of that doctrine. But as, with the voice of one man, they united in rejecting all distinction of personality in the Deity; if they affixed any definite or consistent idea, to the terms they used on this subject; it must surely have been their intention, to ascribe supreme divinity, to God the Father only, the uncreated cause of all things. It has been judiciously observed, respecting our early Friends, ‘ That on the subject of Christ, they sheltered themselves behind the broad shield of allegory, and thus did not clearly discriminate, between Christ as a person, and Christ as a principle. And that this led to great ambiguity of expression in them, and their successors down to the present day. Under the idea of possessing a sound sentiment, clear to their own conceptions, many of them have personified the spirit of divine illumination, under the name of Christ, or Christ within, or in other words, Christ as a principle.’

“ I apprehend it was the oneness of this principle with God, which our early Friends alone considered, as properly divine, and an object of worship.”

Their next quotation commences in the middle of a paragraph, and is, to the end of it, a citation from Penn’s Works. On what ground, or why, they adduced it, I do not understand; nor did they now attempt to explain. It is given in italics, and with the preceding part of the paragraph, is as follows: *ibid*, p. 18.

“ As this work of William Penn’s, is addressed to a professed Socinian, with whom he was far from uniting in sentiment upon all points, the terms in

which he expresses himself, when speaking of their errors, may elucidate his own sentiments, as in the following passage; where he professes to trace to its source, their error on the subject before us. ‘*This is,*’ says Penn, ‘*the great mystery of the Socinians; indeed the rock on which they split; they do not distinguish betwixt the form of God, and likeness of men; that which came into the world, to do the will of God, and the body he took, in which to perform it.*’ Vol. ii. p. 136.

“*It will I think not be denied, that modern Unitarians, do clearly distinguish in this case, whatever may have been the fact, with the persons to whom William Penn alluded. They acknowledge, with William Penn, the truth of that text, which says, ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.’*” 2 Cor. xi. 19.

Their third quotation is from p. 86, 87 of the same tract, and exhibits the sense of the passage fairly. Viz.

“In the last paragraph of this chapter, Vindex admits, as we have already had occasion to observe, ‘that our ancient Friends did—reject the term person, in speaking of the Son, considered as the word.’ If so, in what proper sense can they be said consistently therewith, to assert the eternal divinity of Christ, or to offer him the tribute of adoration? Unless they meant only, by that phrase, the eternal divinity of the spirit and life of the Father, which was revealed in him, by which he did his Father’s will.

“So I understand the general tenor of their writings, and such appears to me, with yet greater clearness, and weight of evidence, to be the indubitable import of scripture doctrine.”

Their fourth quotation is also fairly given; but where the criminality of having written either this, or the former, can be, I do not comprehend; nor

did the respondents attempt to explain. It is as follows:—

“ Vindex next observes, that Barclay, ‘ speaking of the self-same divine operation, calls it God in one place, and Christ in another.’ No doubt he does, and so does the scripture, frequently; but almost numberless passages from each may be adduced to shew, that their respective authors spoke only of unity of design—of oneness of spirit in the Messiah, with the only true God, and not of the Son and Sent of the Father, being really and substantially the same being with the Father himself, whose name is Jehovah.

“ If this be, which, however, I do not allow, ‘ to disjoin God and Christ,’ in reverence to the former, and under the fullest conviction of therein acting in conformity to the doctrine and precepts of the latter, I feel it to be my duty as a Quaker, and a Christian, to avow the distinction explicitly, and to make no compromise with what appears to me to be the truth, by the united voice of scripture and reason.”

Their fifth quotation was extracted from the middle of a paragraph, with what judgment or fairness the reader will judge, who marks the extent of it by the italics in the following extract. From p. 54—56 of the same tract.

“ I had said in the Appeal, ‘ The distance must ever remain infinite, and immeasurable, between the first divine cause of all things, and any other being whatever, how highly soever the same may have been endowed, even to the fulness of the possession of all heavenly perfections.’

“ Vindex transcribes this sentence, except the word ‘ distance;’ instead of which, he has inserted, ‘ difference.’ The import of which word, in that place, I do not approve, as the union between God and his beloved Son, is ever described in the scriptures to be entire and compleat, as I reverently be-

lieve it to be ; although I cannot agree with Vindex, that the scriptures to which we both appeal, teach us to consider them as really and substantially the same Being.

“ ‘ Lastly,’ says Vindex, ‘ I desire it may be remembered, that the scripture never speaks of ‘ an infinite—distance between (may I write it with reverence) God and Christ; but always of oneness: those passages probably, or some of them excepted, where the flesh is taken into the account.’

“ Perhaps not, as to the first part of Vindex’s assertion. Does the above passage even imply, that I have taken it literally from the scriptures? But will Vindex question, that the highest endowments of any created being, must ever fall infinitely short of the perfections of the uncreated cause of all things? I do not so understand his objection. *We are agreed that there is but one God, and also in rejecting all distinction of personality in speaking of the Son, as the word. We differ in sentiment, as to the import of scripture doctrine, whether we are authorised from thence to conclude, the Father only is that one God, as I take to be the case; or whether the Son himself, be in reality the Father, and ‘ God over all,’ as Vindex contends.* It is, however, apparent he is aware that God and Christ are very differently described in the Scriptures, and he would account for the whole of this variation, by supposing it refers merely to the ‘ Flesh.’ As to the oneness of Christ, with the Father, in any scriptural sense of the phrase, I have not questioned it. ‘ I and my Father are one,’ says Christ, ‘ as recorded in the tenth chapter of John, but in the preceding verse he declares,’ ‘ My Father is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them (the sheep which my Father gave me,) out of my Father’s hand.’ He even says, ‘ I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not

mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.' John vi. 30. And again, 'The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.' John xiv. 10. In Christ's prayer to his Father, a little time before Judas betrayed him into the hands of the Jews, does he not clearly distinguish between the only true God, and Jesus Christ? When he says, 'This is life eternal—to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent—Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.' John xvii. 3, 11.

"The oneness which Christ claimed with the Father, he has here explained to be the same in nature, although no doubt transcendently different in degree, to that which true Christians may be capable of, one towards another.—'That they all may be one, as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us,—that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.' Ibid, v. 21, 22, 23.

"In the scriptures, the supreme Being is frequently called God, with respect to Jesus Christ, as well as to mankind at large: in such like terms as these, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' " 2 Cor. xi. 31. Eph. i. 3. 17. 1 Peter, i. 3, &c.

Their sixth quotation was also taken from the middle of a paragraph, without any reference to the context, although it expressly relates to what goes before, without referring to which, the import of the passage read by the respondents cannot be known. The reader will see this, who considers what he can make of that part of the following passage, which is given in italics, when severed from the context. Ibid. p. 79.

Respecting the text Luke ii. 52, which says, that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

"It should be recollected, that Jesus is there spoken of in his puerile appearance," says Vindex, adding, "and I see no difficulty in the reverent belief, that the Deity, the inexhaustible source of increasing good, should rejoice in the increasing manifestations of his own perfection."

"What less is this, than ascribing a 'puerile appearance,' and rejoicing, to the Deity from the contemplation of the increasing display 'of his own perfection?' *Into such unscriptural, and, I think, irreverent expressions, even when speaking of a 'reverent belief,' does Vindex's notion, that Christ is properly and truly God, betray him.* I shall conclude this subject, with an instructive extract from the writings of the learned Casaubon, who declares, 'that the best and most learned of the Fathers, have been so bewildered in palpable contradictions, whether the Lord and Governor of the world, who fills the universe, was concealed in the body of an infant; that it contains an objection against Christianity, the most considerable that ever was made, and which has kept more people from embracing the Christian faith, than any that he knew. That this doctrine when it came to be explained, produced many divisions which were called heresies, and looked upon as crimes. And these divisions produced persecution.'"

Their last quotation from this tract is a single sentence taken from the middle of a paragraph in p. 80. It comprised so much of the following passage as is given in italics.

"*Although we are agreed in approving this one quotation, I do not see how it can square with Vindex's notion that the Father and the Son, as they are described in scripture language, are in reality one, and*

the same Being. For in this excellent quotation, [as Vindex admits it to be] Christ is said to be 'appointed of the Father, to give life—to them that receive him and obey his gospel.' Penington's Works, Vol. I. p. 705. And the metaphorical epithets, that are afterwards applied to him, are not only by fair, but by necessary construction, to be understood of his APPOINTED DIGNITIES AND OFFICES. In what other sense, can Christ be said to be, as he is here called, 'THE SAVIOUR AND SALVATION OF GOD?' That is, a Saviour, by 'THE WILL, AND ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF THE FATHER,' for the salvation of men. Or how can he be called a 'PRIEST,' a 'PROPHET,' not to mention the other epithets descriptive of mere instruments in the hand of another, if the writer of this passage conceived he was strictly speaking, God himself? See Peter's Sermon in Acts ii. "Jesus of Nazareth, a MAN approved by miracles, wonders, and signs, which GOD DID BY HIM in the midst of you." Can any thing be more explicit?

Having read the above passages, to which the respondents made no specific objections, although I repeatedly called upon them to do so, I desired the committee to notice, that the Reply to Vindex, from which they were extracted, was published as long since as 1803, and desired them to consider, whether it was just or reasonable to bring forward such an accusation, so long after its publication. There was a rule of the Society, I observed, which declared all such ill-timed accusations to be "both unseasonable and dishonourable."

The 8th quotation adduced by the respondents, I observed, was from "Christian Unitarianism Vindicated, by Verax," p. 134. It appears to me the most extraordinary accusation I ever heard against any professing Christian.—Viz. That "the doctrine of the Scriptures, respecting the point at issue be-

tween us, (that is, John Bevans and Verax) who is ALONE GOD OVER ALL, is so clear, as to be removed to the greatest possible distance from all mystery." Such is the offence of which I am accused. That I consider the Scriptures to contain *the clearest possible revelation* who is *alone the true object of worship*, OR GOD OVER ALL, I readily acknowledge. There is, in my mind, no mystery, no ambiguity whatever in them, *upon this point*. Yet, do not misunderstand me, *I find nothing in them concerning the essence OF THAT GREAT BEING, who is wholly incomprehensible by any created intelligence.*

Before I entered upon the ninth and last of the respondents' criminatory quotations, I appealed to the committee, whether it could possibly be relevant or admissible, for the respondents to bring forward such a charge as this, *in reply to my appeal*, the subject to which it related never having been mentioned or alluded to by them at their conferences with me.

Luke Howard said, unless the respondents consented to give it up, and considered it to be *unconnected with the object of their appointment*, they could not refuse hearing both parties thereon, fairly and fully.

I replied, as it relates to the doctrine of divine influence on the human mind, which was often termed the distinguishing tenet of the Society, and as the respondents' quotation gives a very imperfect view of the passage at large, I must, in justice to myself, read the whole, which would occupy a considerable time, and trespass still farther on their patience.

The committee assenting to this, I read the whole passage, p. 73—80, but, for the sake of brevity, I shall omit the former part of it, which, however, shews that William Penn accused the Socinians of his time, with holding "that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *are three distinct essences, or persons;*" and also, with having relinquished the doctrine of

the "Primitive Socinians," concerning immediate divine revelation. The quotations he has adduced, from the works of Socinus, Crellius, and other eminent writers, "*in the Socinian way*," fill more than two folio pages, Vol. ii. 108—110, and evince that the doctrine of the divine influence on the mind has been, and may be, as fully believed, by those who maintain the simple unity of the Deity, as by any advocate for the doctrine of the Trinity. After quoting several of these extracts from Crellius, and one on the same subject from Penn, Verax observes, p. 76, that,

"The above substantial accordance between the 'primitive Socinians' and 'the early Quakers,' appears to have been insisted upon by William Penn, to confute the arguments of his Socinian opponent, and to prove how widely he had deviated from their ancient faith, on this subject. In what degree those who are now called Socinians, have returned to the opinions of their ancestors, respecting 'the doctrine of divine influence on the human mind,' or improved upon them, I shall not venture to determine; but I hope the following extracts from a discourse by Dr. Priestley upon that subject, may tend to abate the prejudices of some of my readers, by shewing, that the real difference of opinion, between those who are supposed to take opposite sides of the question, may not be so great as is generally imagined.

"'There are two things,' says Dr. Priestley, 'that we should principally attend to, with respect to God, and both are of the greatest importance. The first is, the consideration of his universal presence, and his constant, uncontrolled agency; and the second is, his acting by natural means, or in a regular manner.

"'We must, in the first place, endeavour to see God in every thing, and to see every thing in God, that is, in its relation to him. We must habitually

look beyond all second causes, considering them in no other light than as instruments in the hands of God, the only proper cause of all, and employed by him to accomplish, in the best manner, his excellent purposes.

“ But, in the second place, it is almost of as much importance, that we consider God not as a being incapable of foresight, and acting as particular occasions and emergencies require, but as foreseeing every thing that can ever come to pass, and adapting means to ends from all eternity : as acting by general laws and established rules, without ever deviating from them, except for great and extraordinary purposes ; and then, in such a manner, as that his interposition shall be publicly known and acknowledged, so as to have the proper effect of miracles. Now that God has sufficiently provided for the instruction and reformation of mankind by the gospel, we are to consider the age of miracles, as over. And if we are not to expect miraculous interpositions in the external world, similar to those that were exhibited in the times of Moses and the prophets, or those that attended and promoted the first promulgation of the gospel, much less can we expect any miraculous influences on the minds of men ; which, in a moral sense, do not appear to have ever been the subject of miracles, in former times. Indeed, in this sense, they would have been a very improper subject of miracles, on many obvious accounts.

“ Not to respect the general presence and agency of God is practical atheism ; it is living without God in the world ; and to expect his miraculous interpositions, and not to consider him as acting by general laws, is to encourage an enthusiasm, and a delusion, that is, in some cases, almost as dangerous, leading men to neglect the natural and only efficacious means of improving their characters, and to depend on certain supernatural impulses and feelings, of

vague and uncertain description, and that cannot have any relation to moral virtue, which consists in a supreme reverence and love of God, an entire devotedness to his will, in doing and suffering, a disinterested love of his creatures and our brethren, and a just self-government, equally favourable to both.

“ ‘ On the whole, the doctrine of divine agency and divine influence, respecting things spiritual, as well as temporal, is true, and in the highest degree important. Our characters approach to perfection, in proportion as we keep it in view, and they are debased and bad, in proportion as we lose sight of it. *But the doctrine of a proper supernatural influence on the mind is false; and though, like most other false principles, it may be very innocent, not in fact superseding the use of the natural means of religion, it is always delusive, and in some cases highly dangerous.*

“ ‘ Let this doctrine, therefore, teach us, as individuals, to cultivate above all things a spirit of habitual devotion, founded on the belief of the divine presence with us, and of his constant agency upon us, and upon all things. This is that faith which is the only sure anchor of the soul in a tempestuous world, or rather it is the wings on which we rise above the world, and approach to a state of union with God.

“ ‘ But let us carefully avoid indulging the vain and delusive imagination of an immediate and supernatural communion with God, which is always the foundation of spiritual pride, and the bane of humble devotion and virtue. For there is no true devotion without the deepest humility, and what is sometimes not improperly called self-annihilation.’

“ It may perhaps be remarked, that the divine influence is represented in the above passage as acting upon the human mind by natural means, whereas the Quakers are accustomed to consider it as su-

pernatural. Yet, as they have always held it to be universal in the most extensive sense, or given unto every man to profit withal, this is to represent it, as operating in the most regular manner upon the human mind ; or, as Dr. Priestley describes it, by natural means ; to distinguish this diffusive gift, from that extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, by which Jesus Christ and his apostles were enabled to do many wonderful works. Nor do I understand, that in the use of such like expressions, our best writers so much refer to the identity of the gift, as of the great and bountiful Giver. And the following extract from Penn's Apology, for the Principles and Practices of the People called Quakers, exhibits so clear an account of their own view of this distinguishing tenet, which is even yet frequently misunderstood, that I incline to lay it before the reader.

“ ‘ I would,’ says William Penn, ‘ that all should understand what we mean by revelation, and that is this ; that from our conviction of the least evil, to our redemption from it ; and all the knowledge we have of God, his way, and good pleasure towards us, throughout the whole exercise of our religious life ; we ascribe our knowledge and instruction to no other thing, than the discoveries or revelation of the spirit of God, in our hearts. But this not in a moment, but gradually, through our obedience to what we know of him. For they that do my will (saith God) shall know of my doctrine. John vii. 17.

“ ‘ Not a man in the world,’ adds he, ‘ need be long ignorant of our meaning of revelation, if they did but consider, that it is the inspiration of the Almighty which gives them to understand, what is good, and what is evil ; that they might do the one, and reject the other. And whilst men continue in such watchfulness and obedience, they are daily furnished with such discoveries from God, as suit their state and condition.

“ ‘ I know,’ continues he, ‘ the monstrous conceits, that some have, of our meaning by revelation, fancying we understand whimsical raptures, strange and prodigious trances ; but such imagine evil, of things they know not. We disclaim any share or interest in those vain whimsies, and idle intoxications ; professing our revelation to be solid and necessary discovery from the Lord, of those things that do import and concern our daily conditions, in reference to the honour which is due to him, and care owing to our own souls.’ ” Works, vol. ii. p. 38.

The only part of the above passage which the respondents advanced, is that which is given in italics, p. 203.

When I had read the whole, I desired the committee to notice the manner in which the extract was introduced, from which the respondents had so disingenuously picked out one sentence, in order to support their charges, by adducing a fresh accusation against me at this late period of the hearing on my appeal. I also called their attention to the evident intent of the passage objected to, which was to draw a parallel between the “ vain whimsies and idle intoxications,” which had been often imputed to the Society, but which William Penn had so strongly disclaimed, and those “ false principles” which Dr. Priestley has described as “ always delusive, and in some cases highly dangerous.*” Such I thought

* The pretension which has often been set up to the gift of discerning spirits, by many approved ministers in the Society of Friends, I have long considered as both delusive and dangerous in a very high degree. Many injurious instances of the former may be adduced, and some of the latter ; one of which occurred in the year 1785, in my native city, which made so deep an impression on my mind, as can never be effaced, while the faculty of memory lasts. It was this. A preacher in a public Meeting for worship, described the state of some individual in the Meeting, as having *sinned out the day of his salvation*.

This denunciation forcibly struck the imagination of a young

was the fair construction of the passage, taken all together.

In reply to the 4th plea of the respondents, p. 185. it may suffice to say, it implies an obligation, not to promote the circulation of any paper, without entering a protest against any unsound doctrine, it may chance to contain! If this be criminal, who shall escape censure?

To the 5th plea of the respondents, I replied, there was no just analogy between such writings, as they alluded to, and the Remarks in question. That on all moral and religious subjects, I thought temperate and well-meant discussion, was always favourable, to the cause of truth and virtue.

In reply to their 6th plea, I informed the committee, that the first knowledge I obtained, that such a *Book Society* existed, was from a man of distinguished talents, and character, whose attachment to the cause of scriptural truth, and pure Christianity, was ardent and sincere. The person of whom I spoke, was the late William Rathbone, of Liverpool. From him I first learned the character of the works, circulated by this *Book Society*, and his name was annually published in the list of its members, for 12 years before I became a subscriber.

man, who was present. The persuasion he imbibed, that he was the person whose state was thus described, was so strong, that every effort to remove it, proved fruitless. Yet many were exerted, and I have much reason to believe, in a judicious manner, particularly by one elder of the Meeting. But the fanatical poison was too deeply infused, for the medicine of calm reasoning to reach it. For rather more than a week it operated on a remarkably innocent, but weak mind, with increasing violence, till at length he put a period to his life, *within a few doors of the house where I then resided.*

The reader may judge from this melancholy catastrophe, with what concern I perused the encouragement the philanthropic Clarkson has so injudiciously held out in his "Portraiture of Quakerism," Vol. III. p. 286, to this kind of preaching, *as being peculiarly "efficacious and useful."* See also Verax's "Defence of Christian Unitarianism," p. 109—111.

As he had never been even censured for his connexion therewith, how should I imagine, it could be deemed an offence against the rules of the discipline, for me to become a subscriber to this *Book Society*?

The late Dr. Fothergill, I observed, and many other respectable members of the Society, encouraged Purver's translation of the scriptures, *as being an Improved Version*, which at least proved their conviction that the received text required correction. His translation was published in 1764. About this time, I have reason to believe the acquisition of a more correct version, was rather a favourite idea, with the leading characters in the Society. And I well remember, some years afterwards, Castello's Latin Version being recommended to my attention by my schoolmaster, a man of unquestioned orthodoxy among Friends, as a more correct translation than the Vulgate.*

The 7th plea of the respondents is, that I did not put the same construction on texts of scripture, that they did. No complaint is made of my rejecting the text, but their interpretation. This of itself sufficiently evinces what the true character of their labours has been. I do not impeach their motives, but I cannot approve, or countenance such claims, by whomsoever they may be set up, or patronised. It tends to destroy the rights of private judgment, to discourage an open profession of religious truth, upon conviction, and even the love of it, and to

* Yet soon after it was first published, the reputedly orthodox Calvin, among other harsh and unjust censures of the candid, pious and learned Castello, calls him, "a base corrupter of the sacred writings, a contemner of all religion, a disciple and brother of Servetus." And not only so, but he caused him to be banished, because he could not, for conscience sake, believe that God had ordained men to be damned, as he did Servetus to be burned for denying the divinity of Christ! See Chandler's History of Persecution, p. 312, and Barclay's Apology, Prop. 14. § 5.

set up, in every Monthly Meeting, a petty inquisition of overseers, or other officers of the church, to sit in judgment upon their brethren, on their construction of texts of scripture.

To shew how very different William Penn's sentiments were, I read the following passages from his "Address to Protestants," the 4th § of which is, "*Of debasing the true value of morality*, under pretence of *higher things*, and mistaking in great measure *the very end of Christ's coming*."—Viz.

"The reproaches that men of morality receive at the hands of lewd men, are more their honour than their suffering. That which is most of all anxious, is, that morality is denied to be Christianity, that virtue has any claim to grace, and that those who glory to be called Christians, can be so partial and cruel, as to renounce a mere just man their society.—And pray what's the matter? Why! though this person be a sober liver, yet he is but a general believer; his faith is at large. 'Tis true he believes in God, but I hear little of his faith in Christ. Very well; does he not therefore believe in Christ? Or must he therefore be without the pale of salvation? Is it possible that a man can truly believe in God, and be damned? But as he that *believes in Christ*, *believes in God*, so he that *believes in God*, *believes in Christ*; for he that believes on him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, his faith shall be imputed to him for righteousness, and says Christ himself; he that believeth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." Works, Vol. I. p. 767. The next passage to which I called the attention of the committee was this:—

"Let us suppose (says William Penn) a Turk is convinced, that Christ is that, which he believed Mahomet to be, the greatest of all prophets; that Mahomet was an imposter, that Jesus is the only Saviour and Mediator: but being catechistically

taught the two natures in one person, the hypostatical union, in fine, the Athanasian creed and other articles of faith, or rites of your church, not so clearly expressed in Scripture, nor easily apprehended or assented to, will not this poor creature be looked upon, either as infidel or heretic, and renounced all share in Christ, and Christian fellowship, because his weakness, or understanding will not allow him to come up to the full inventory of articles believed, and imposed by you? [Protestants.] Certainly you must either be partial, and give him that liberty you deny to persons of equal tenderness, or else you must, after your present streightness, conclude him infidel, or heretic, though he believe ONE GOD, Christ to be the only Mediator, the gift of the Spirit, the necessity of holiness, communion and charity. But I would beseech you that we may consider, if this bears any proportion with the wisdom and love of God, in sending Christ into the world to save you and me?

“Christ himself, to whom all power was given in heaven and in earth, submitted himself to the test: he did not require them to believe him, because he would be believed; he refers them to the witness that God bore to him: ‘If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.’ He also sends them to the Scriptures, and pleads the truth of his authority from that of his doctrine and miracles: ‘If I had not done among them the works which none other man did.’ And finally challenges them to convince him but of one sin: ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?’ He offers to reason the matter, and submit himself to the judgment of truth, and well he might, who was truth itself.

“But an imposing church bears witness of herself, and will be both party, and judge. She requires assent without evidence, and faith without proof,

therefore false. Christian religion ought to be carried on, only by that way, by which it was introduced, which was persuasion. 'If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me.' And this is the glory of it, that it does not destroy, but fairly conquer the understanding." Ibid. p. 776, 777.

"And as it is one great mark of the false church to pervert the right end of true doctrine, so hath she excelled in the abuse of that excellent word self-denial; for she hath translated it from life to understanding, from morals to faith: *subjugare intellectum in obsequium fidei*, to subject the understanding to the obedience of faith, is the perpetual burden of their song, and conclusion of their conferences. But what is this faith? That which conquers the world and purifies the heart? By no means. But it is to believe that the church of Rome is the true church, and the Pope Christ's vicar, and the visible head of that church.

"Thus that self-denial which relates to our wills and affections in a corrupt state, they apply to the use of our understanding about religion, as if it were the same thing, to deny that which we understand, and know to be the will of God that we should deny, (which is the Christian self-denial) and to deny that very knowledge and understanding, which is God's gift and our honour. Whereas religion and reason are so consistent, that religion can neither be understood nor maintained, without reason; for if this must be laid aside, I am so far from being infallibly assured of my salvation, that I am not capable of any measure, or distinction of good from evil, truth from falsehood. Why? I have no understanding, or at least not the use of any. All the disadvantage the Protestant is under in this, is that of his greater modesty, and that he submits his belief to be tried, which the other refuses, under the pretence of un-

accountable infallibility ; to that authority reason demurs, right reason I mean ; the reason of the first nine verses of the first of John. For so Tertullian, and some other ancient, as well as modern critics, give us the word logos ; and the divine reason is one in all ; that lamp of God which lights our candle and enlightens our darkness, and is the measure and test of our knowledge.

“ So that whereas some people excuse their embracing of that religion, by urging the certainty that is in it ; I do say, ’tis but a presumption. For a man can never be certain of that, about which he has not the liberty of examining, understanding or judging ; confident, (I confess) he may be, but that’s quite another thing, than being certain.

“ Yet I must never deny, but that every Christian ought to believe as the church believes, provided the church be true ; but the question is, which is that true church ? And when that is answered, as a man may unlawfully execute a lawful sentence, so he may falsely believe, as the true church believes. For if I believe what she believes, only because she believes it, and not because I am convinced in my understanding and conscience of the truth of what she believes, my faith is false though her’s be true ; I say it is not true to me ; I have no evidence of it.” Ibid. p. 778.

After reading these passages, I called the attention of the committee to the respondents 8th and 9th pleas, p. 185, which implied, I observed, too plainly to be mistaken, *the uncertainty they were under upon both points*. The overseers accused me, and seem to have trusted to the subsequent visits to be paid me, to furnish evidence, that it was on sufficient ground. Under these circumstances, the indefinite minute of 12th Month, 19th, 1811, which charged me with having “ imbibed, and aided in propagating, some opinions contrary to the doctrines

of the Society," was made. As to the Remarks, my main object in putting them into the hands of some of my friends, was rather to promote discussion, and enquiry, as favourable to the cause of truth, than the particular sentiments of the writer. Nor did my being a subscriber to the London Unitarian Book Society, imply an approval of all that was said in the preface to its Book of Rules.

In reply to the declared preference for inquisitorial proceedings, which the 10th plea of the respondents, p. 185, manifested, I endeavoured to impress the committee, with the dangerous consequences of such a mode of procedure, under any circumstances, and especially where the examiners into the soundness of the faith of others, *refused to give any intelligible account of their own faith, or even to define their own accusations.* Such was the manner in which I had been treated by the respondents.

As to the 11th plea, I observed, that the ostensible object for which they made the selection, was to inform me the grounds of their accusation, viz. "what the principles of the Society are, to which this minute refers, and where are they to be found clearly and explicitly laid down?"

On the injustice of such a selection, I remonstrated in the following manner with the respondents, at my conference with them, Feb. 7, 1812.

"In your reply to the above query, how have you acted? The tenor of it implies no less than an accusation of universal scepticism, and unbelief. Could this be your intention? It is true you avoid any direct reference to the [accusing] minute, and speak of the principles of the Society in the most general terms. Yet the references with which it concludes are so extensive, as to include almost all the doctrines of much importance, professed by the Society. Am I thus to be held up as holding opinions contrary to all those doctrines? If you disclaim such

an intention, your reply is very inconsiderate, or very disingenuous, and unjust."

The respondents at that time disclaimed having had any such intention, and admitted, it might have been better, if they had confined their selection to such passages, as they conceived were contrary to those I had imbibed. Yet now they are again adduced for the same indefensible purpose!

The 12th plea of the respondents, p. 186, I observed, most strikingly confirms the correctness of my minutes. They did not think it their place to enter into reasoning with me, concerning the very points of doctrine on which they supposed, *but did not know*, that I held erroneous sentiments. The first reason they assign for this, is curious enough, but it is to pay me an unmerited compliment, which I must disclaim. I am far from being, or thinking myself so good a *scripturarian*, as they are now disposed to give me credit for. Yet I may truly say, I read and contemplate the New Testament with increasing comfort and satisfaction, as I become better acquainted with its contents.

The manner of my receiving their admonitions, let my minutes; of the overseers visits, testify. These they admitted to be correct, and my uniform deportment to be open, friendly, and respectful. But the respondents say, I am not disposed to make any alteration in my sentiments, as if that was as easy as changing a suit of clothes.

On their 13th plea, I observed, it had already appeared to the committee, by my minutes, that the respondents gave me to understand, they meant to proceed *upon some rule of the Society*, but that the Monthly Meeting was to decide *what rule applied to the case*. When I enquired of the Meeting about this, I was referred to the committee. At length, *the cause of this indecision is explained*, and I am told,

before you, that the respondents *do not know any rule that directly applies to the case.*

The ingenious device of recurring to the preface to the Book of Extracts, to supply the defect of the rules, is just as much to the purpose, as it would be, for a prosecutor to allege, in a court of justice, that although there was no law that reached the case, of a person he had accused, yet there was a pertinent passage in the preface to Blackstone's Commentaries, which, in general terms, held out the importance of orderly conduct, and obedience to the laws. The apostle Paul was of the judgment, that where no law is, there is no transgression. My accusers think otherwise.

The 14th plea of the respondents, strikes me as containing one of the most extraordinary propositions that ever was submitted, to the consideration of any persons in the exercise of judicial powers. In the first place, the respondents say, they presume the committee will put a certain construction on a phrase which they have used, and with which they do not seem to be so well pleased as they were. Perhaps they may have found, that it is not a scriptural phrase, and they may also have found reason to doubt, whether it is scripturally applied in either of these documents.

But the most singular part of their statement is, that they presume the committee will understand, by those words, "the eternal divinity of Christ," that "*the godhead of Christ,*" is disclaimed in the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1810, and in the preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society. Yet neither of these terms are so much as mentioned in either of those documents. Just before the conclusion of this sitting, I requested to take home with me, the paper read by the respondents, in reply to

my address to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, p. 117—121, to which they made no objection, and which *after some consideration by themselves*, the committee granted, on my engaging to return it to them, *and not to take a copy.*

The committee adjourned to 11th Month, 11th, to 4 in the afternoon.

QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE.

11th Month, 11th, 1812. Seventh Sitting.

Seventeen of the committee present.

Being called upon to proceed with my defence, I observed, it was, at least, doubtful, whether the true meaning of the Greek word, translated in the received version *godhead*, is justly rendered. It is so translated in Acts xvii. 29, Rom. i. 20, and Col. ii. 9, and I believe it occurs no where else in the scriptures. It is far from being a correct translation of any Latin version I have seen, and seems to have been intended to denote something respecting the *divine nature, or essence*, respecting which, *the scriptures are wholly silent.* It has been rendered, "the divine Being," which is equally literal, and not liable to the same objection.

In Rom. i. 20, I take the apostles meaning to be correctly expressed, by rendering those words thus, "*even his eternal power, and providence.*"

I prefer rendering Col. ii. 9, thus, as being more consonant to every Latin version I have seen, and to the Greek also.

"*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Deity bodily.*"

To the 15th plea of the respondents, p. 187, I replied, that the real cause of my omitting much mention of this part of their labours with me, was be-

To Beior

Beiorus.

cause I wished to avoid any chance of implicating a most respectable man, who was only incidentally concerned, and that, not in a manner which any person could reasonably disapprove. But if the committee, or the respondents, requested it, I could now state, verbally, the substance of what did pass on that occasion. It was sufficiently impressed upon my memory. They did not request it.

I then read the following written reply to the paper, the respondents presented, and read, at the last sitting.—Viz.

TO THE QUARTERLY MEETING'S COMMITTEE.

On hearing the paper read, which the respondents produced at your last sitting, I was forcibly impressed with the striking contrast, these after thoughts exhibit, by whomsoever they were composed, when compared with the complexion of the labours of the overseers, and with the manner in which the discipline was administered by the committee, appointed to visit me. Such previous rumours of impending *dealing*, and disownment, had reached my ears, that I had never much doubt of the issue of the committee's labours, and none at all of the intent, of those Friends of other Meetings, who had incited the overseers, to commence those proceedings. Notwithstanding which, I am now given to understand, the respondents do not admit the justice of such a representation.

This implies, at least, the impropriety of such a line of conduct, as I imagined them to have acted upon, on such evidence, as would, I believe, till it was again explicitly disclaimed, produce the same impression on my mind.

We are now told, it was "*exceedingly painful*," to the respondents, "to have so much reason to *apprehend*," that I "disbelieved one of the fundamental principles of the Society—the divinity, or

deity, of Jesus Christ." So that after all, it was, as I conjectured from the first, an apprehension of my being in error, on a point of faith, on which the respondents proceeded, and not any knowledge of the fact.

They had, however, it seems, "no personal antipathy against me, and highly esteeming" my "character, as a member of *civil* Society, it would have been far more pleasing to us, (say they) as men, and Christians, had" I "*been careful to maintain the the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

I should think so. I am sure the sentiment so far as it goes, is more conformable to the Christian spirit, than such principles, as I supposed them to have acted upon. But I cannot deem this corrected exposition of their sentiments, as squaring with that genuine Christian spirit, which pervades the New Testament, and breathes forth most effulgently in the recorded discourses of our great Master. Cannot they then extend any esteem towards a man, but merely as a member of *civil* society, with the word *civil* so emphatically dashed under, lest I should mistake the import, and extent, of their expression of esteem? Do all the precepts of the gospel, which enjoin Christians to esteem each other, not in proportion to an imaginary conformity on points of faith, which the hypocrite may, on the one hand, profess to believe, and from which a sincere believer in the truth of the gospel, may conscientiously startle at, on the other, as not being expressed in scripture terms? Do these, I would ask them, sink into utter insignificance in their estimation, and cease to be obligatory on Christians? Is imaginary uniformity without conviction, the point of supreme importance, and is the man who may object to receiving articles of faith, thus held forth to him in unscriptural terms, to be accused of thereby violating *the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace?*"

This apostolic precept is so far from being applied to enforce such uniformity, that it is expressly connected with the following opposite injunction :

“ Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Eph. iv. 1, 2.

The respondents say, they “ are not aware that they have stepped beyond their commission, or extended their enquiry, farther than was proper. They were deputed to visit a member of the Meeting, on a representation, that he had imbibed, and aided in propagating, some opinions contrary to the principles of the Society, corroborated, but not solely supported, by the two facts, stated to have been thrown before the Meeting.”

This ingenious distinction, is more specious than solid. The truth is, no other facts whatever, were either adduced in evidence, or alluded to. Such a plea would, if admitted to be valid, overturn one of the soundest, and most important principles of all equitable, judicial proceedings. It is true, collateral evidence may be properly enough adduced against an accused person, but it ought to relate, in point of time, to a period preceding that of his having been accused, and should also be otherwise connected with his supposed offence.

The respondents allege further, that “ it cannot surely be supposed, that when a person is under *dealing, for defection in any respect*, that no evidence in proof of such defection, can be heard, or referred to, by a visiting committee, except it has been adduced in the previous stages of the discipline.”

This I never objected to, *except to being put upon interrogatories*. And much as the committee of the Monthly Meeting complain, *of my refusal to answer*, their report evinces in the most conclusive manner, if its evidence may be relied on, that these interrogatories were not put, as is now represented, in proof

of the original charge, but as I have all along stated, for the express purpose of annexing to it, *other matters of accusation*.

“ Though the writings of *Verax*, (say the respondents) might not be mentioned by the overseers, the committee presumed, they were at liberty to advert to the evidence they furnished, on the subject first introduced to notice, by the Remarks, and the Unitarian Society’s Book of Rules, &c.” But these are not adduced in the report as evidence of the original accusations, *but as distinct charges*.

“ Nor did they, (say the respondents) *take that evidence at second hand*, or pin their faith on the report of others, *but patiently investigated for themselves*.” On this part of the statement, the truth I have no doubt is, from the acknowledgement of the committee to me during their visits, that however patiently they investigated the contents of those works for themselves, *they had long been listening to the report of others, concerning my supposed errors*, without exerting one effort to rescue me from the labyrinth in which they heard I was involved.

“ It is true,” say the respondents, “ the committee were ‘*mere agents*,’ not however, as is insinuated, but solely for the Monthly Meeting.” This is, I think, to misrepresent me. I have rather asserted, than insinuated this, and that on evidence, which has not, that I know of, been shewn to be insufficient.

I was not surprised, (as the respondents seem to have supposed) that the quotations from *Verax*’s writings, submitted to the Quarterly Meeting’s committee, were not previously mentioned to me, as I well remember my objection to their introduction of such extraneous matter. But I never before understood the curious project, now announced for the first time, of “*Verax being introduced as a witness*.” I therefore think it “reasonable now to complain,”

not that they had omitted to inform me, "what evidence that author had furnished them with," of which I have never complained, but that they have unjustly and irregularly adduced a fresh charge against me, upon that evidence, after I had been already put upon my trial on another distinct accusation.

"The appellant dwells much," say the respondents, "on the irrelevancy" of their "labours, *and the weakness of their arguments.*" As to the latter, I am not conscious that I have said much; nor do I well understand how I could. They have stated the grounds why they did not think it necessary to enter into reasoning with me. This is a plea, *I felt the force of as soon as it was urged*; but I little thought I should be afterwards represented, as dwelling much "*on the weakness*" of their "*arguments.*" To this charge I must plead, not guilty. I may have assigned occasionally my reasons, why the respondents' arguments did not bring home conviction to my mind. But as I was favoured with very few of them, I think it will be difficult to make out, that I have dwelt *much* on their "*weakness.*"

The authors of this paper are more correct in saying, I have dwelt much on the Monthly Meeting's committee "*not explaining the terms they made use of.*" I did so, because it was a point that imperiously required it. They had proposed to me as Christian truths, certain propositions, not expressed in scriptural terms. I gently reminded them of the only original charter of Christian faith which I acknowledged, viz. the New Testament. When I found they had acquired an attachment to certain unscriptural phrases, which I thought it was better to drop by the way, although they might have been used by many good Christians and wise men, as fitly describing gospel truths, although those terms were not to be found in the Scriptures.

*The Committee of the Brit. M. G. seem to have been
defective in their method of treating with him
not bringing before him from the first the well-*

To this proposal I could not induce them to accede, nor could their alleging that such or such an author, however pious or orthodox in the estimation of the church to which they belonged, had used such terms as expressive of their belief, satisfy me that I ought, for that reason, to receive them as equally expressive of mine, unless they were used and applied in a similar manner in the Scriptures.

They say, "it was more their intention to represent to the party visited, *the general belief of the Society*, IN THE UNION OF THE DEITY AND MANHOOD IN THE PERSON OF OUR SAVIOUR, (a) and

(a) As this superstructure of the respondents seems to have been founded on that text in Isaiah ix. 6. which in the received version describes a child born, and a son given, as "the mighty God, the everlasting Father," to shew my readers that it is built on an unsubstantial basis, I would refer them to the unexceptionable evidence of the learned Dr. Wall, a clergyman of the established church, respecting "*the old words of the Septuagint*;" that is, of the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, which there is much reason to believe was generally used, if not the only one known, by the Jews of the apostolic age, and by all the writers of the New Testament, whose quotations much better accord therewith than with the Hebrew text, yet sometimes differ from both. None of those writers have quoted this text, as referring to Christ, which surely they would have done, if they had considered it as a prophecy concerning him.

Dr. Wall's "Critical Notes on the Old Testament," published in two Vols. 8vo. in 1734, appear to have been the produce of a dispassionate study of "the Holy Scriptures themselves," towards the latter part of a long life, "after he had left off in great measure the reading of other books." It abounds however with sufficient proofs, of his adherence to that system of doctrines which are commonly deemed orthodox, to prevent his being suspected of perverting this text to favour his pre-conceived notions. In Vol. ii. p. 88, of this elaborate work, he gives the Septuagint rendering of this text according to the Vatican copy thus:—"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name is called the Angel of the great council; for I will bring peace to his princes and health to him." The Alexandrian copy, according to Dr. Wall, is as follows:—"And his name is called the Angel of the great Council, wonderful Counsellor; the Mighty, the Powerful, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the age

to impress upon him the propriety of considering whether he could not be satisfied *to unite in that belief*, rather than to attempt to explain their ideas on *so mysterious a subject*, or to enter into explanation of metaphysical terms."

The use of the terms, "*general belief*," I would observe, implies some certain degree of difference of sentiment, but not more than the nature of mankind, when joined in religious fellowship, has always exhibited to the eye of their omniscient Judge, and common Parent. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that the general belief of the Society was ever proposed to my consideration, as consisting "*in the union of the deity and manhood, in the person of our Saviour.*" I profess myself to be ignorant, that any approved writers in the Society have ever so expressed themselves; if they have, it has escaped my notice. Much less do I recollect any near approach to such language in the Scriptures. I can say truly, without reserve or equivocation, in reply to such an article of faith of modern fabrica-

to come. The Syriac and Arabic translations are the same, or near the same, as the Vatican."

"The words, wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, &c. never were," says Dr. Wall, "nor any like them, in any Greek or Latin Bible, till after Aquila's Translation, [about 125 years after Christ] and," adds he, ("not presently after neither, for Aquila did not put in the word Θεός, though the other words he did) and therefore these words being in a book pretending to a date before Aquila's time, give as plain a proof of its forgery, or being antedated, as that bond did, which being brought into court, appeared to be written on paper which had a certain stamp, or paper-maker's mark, but was dated before any paper of that stamp was ever made." Preface, p. xxx.

In the Hebrew text it is granted the word *God* is used, but the same term is applied to Moses, and to other rulers of the people. And the Hebrew words, used in this texts, are not *Hael Haggibbor*, "the great, the mighty God," which occur Jer. xxxii. 18. but *El Gibbor*, a mighty God, the establishment of whose throne is described in the text, as wholly depending upon "*the zeal of Jehovah.*"

tion, that I unfeignedly believe *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*. How is this less sound and scriptural, or less satisfactory than the former? I will not quarrel with, or think harshly of the religious faith of those, who can conscientiously receive such a standard of faith; I am contented with the more ancient, primitive and venerable *testimony of the Scriptures*. And I cannot, for conscience sake, "*be satisfied to unite in that belief,*" expressed as it is in the terms which fallible men have devised, out of their own imaginations.

Yet am I far from presuming to use, much less to "*to enter into*" any "*explanation*" of terms, the object of which is *to define the nature of God*, which I reverently admit to be not only incomprehensible by the greatest and wisest of mankind, but so far as we are enabled to judge, from what is revealed concerning him by the sacred writers, even by the highest order of created beings in the universe.

Yet the respondents allege, that "*the appellant was more inclined to run into abstruse reasoning on the latter, [metaphysical terms] than to make an explicit and candid declaration on the former, as we conceive, will be evident to you,*" [the Quarterly Meeting's committee] "*from T. F.'s own representation of the case.*"

The appellant is not conscious that he deviated at all into "*abstruse reasoning,*" farther than the use of unscriptural terms by the respondents, in their attempts to criminate him, obliged him in his own defence against their unscriptural accusations. Let the committee judge between us in this matter.

The next allégation of the respondents is, that "*much stress* is also laid by the appellant, on the Meeting's *coming to a judgment*, previously to his being *fully heard* in his own defence." And I add, not without *good reason*. Nor have I any hesitation in saying, that whatever human tribunal acts in such

a manner, on whatever pretence, it cannot exhibit more conclusive evidence of its being in greater haste to condemn, than is compatible with any known principles of justice or impartiality.

That the appellant was very reluctantly suffered to enter into any previous "detail of the proceedings with him," *is too notorious to be denied*. And from the strenuous efforts that were made at the Monthly Meeting, in the 2nd Month, "at which the respondents say, he entered, *very minutely*, into a detail of the proceedings with him, *in the several conferences*," even to exclude him from being present; it is obvious, even this partial act of justice, was most reluctantly granted, and for which he feels himself wholly indebted, not to the Monthly Meeting, but to William Binns, an entire stranger to me, who happened to be present, and whose sense of justice, induced him to express himself in favour of my being heard, as a privilege to which every accused person was entitled. [See p. 56.] My address to that Meeting, was almost wholly confined to the proceedings at the two first visits of the committee, and not, as is now stated, to "*the several conferences*" with them.

The respondents next state, as if there was something improper in so doing, that I endeavoured "*to expose the committee, and to justify*" myself. If I did, it was by as accurate a representation of their conduct, and mine, as I was able to exhibit.

To the accuracy of the next statement of the respondents, I wholly object. After I had, with many interruptions, finished reading my written address to the Meeting, I was immediately urged to withdraw, by several Friends, and indeed very nearly by the general voice of those members, who were accustomed to take any part, in the ordinary proceedings of the Meeting. Nor do I believe, one Friend uttered a single syllable, in favour of my being heard,

much less in favour of my having a "*full opportunity*" to make any further remarks, which might arise, in consequence of the report, then submitted to the Meeting." [See p. 78.]

That I declined doing this voluntarily, for the reasons I then assigned, is true, and it is also true, that I entered at large, "into a consideration of the said report, at the next Monthly Meeting," as also into the proceedings of the two last visits of the committee, so far as I deemed necessary, and all this, as the minutes of the Meeting will testify, after a testimony of denial *had been directed to be drawn up against me*, which important circumstance, the writers of this paper chose to omit, and then proceed to say, that "*after a full,*" and they "*believe a patient hearing,*" I "*withdrew.*" There was indeed a most striking contrast, between the *patience* with which I was heard at this Meeting, after judgment had been pronounced, and the reluctance, with which I was permitted to be heard, at all, at the former Meeting. I must have been both *blind, deaf, and insensible*, not to have seen, heard, and felt this.

But after this "*patient hearing,*" of an accused person, the respondents say, "the Meeting proceeded to take into consideration, what he had laid before it, in order to ascertain, if there were *any grounds* to doubt the propriety of *its former judgment*; but being *unitedly of opinion*, the same ought to be *confirmed*, the testimony was *read*, considered, and *agreed to.*" After such previous proceedings, no other result was to be expected.

"This testimony" the respondents observe, "is said to contain fresh and unfounded accusations, inasmuch as it asserts, that it appears, from their report, that he [the appellant] has joined a society, who publicly avow their disbelief, of the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ, our Lord, &c."

"On this," they remark, "that though it was

not entered on the minute, yet the passage *alluded to*, in the preface to the Unitarian Society's Book of Rules, was several times read, as descriptive of the objects of the Society, there mentioned, and may therefore be considered, as forming part of their report." This outdoes every thing for boldness of assertion, and inconclusiveness of reasoning, I almost ever met with. In the testimony against me, it is positively asserted, that a direct avowal is to be found in a certain document.

But as no such thing can be discovered in it, the writers of both documents now come forward, and say, that a part of another paper was read in the Meeting, and it may therefore "be considered, as forming part of their report." I can by no means agree to this. Grant any one such a latitude of interpretation, and they might consider any thing as proved, in this new style of reasoning, however at variance with the premises. But I think it will be difficult, I might say impossible, to convince any indifferent person, of sound judgment, of the truth of such a conclusion.

The respondents farther allege, "that T. F. however, not only denies its appearing from the report, that any such avowal as they assert, is in it, and not only so, but its being so at all." He does, and that without fear of contradiction, for the London Unitarian Society, has never made such an avowal.

The respondents are entirely mistaken, in supposing that I ever attempted to support that opinion, by giving "a different meaning to the term *divinity*," to that now attached to it, by the respondents, viz. "*Deity*." I do not know that I ever expressed any opinion, about the sense in which they used "the term *divinity*." It is not for me to judge in what sense they use terms, unless they will condescend to explain them, which they refused to do.

They add, "considering it in this point of view,

it will, we believe, be clear to this committee, that the said Unitarian Society do deny it, (at least *in effect*) not only in the aforesaid Preface, but in several of the texts and notes in the Improved Version, (so called) of the New Testament, (which stands at the head of its Catalogue of *approved* books, and of which T. F. much approves) in which Jesus Christ is described as a *mere* man." [I know of no such passage in it.]

I should think, on the other hand, that this point would not "be clear to this committee." I am sure it is far from being clear to me: and I can hardly persuade myself they can give their sanction to so plain a departure from truth, as this testimony contains, (however inadvertently it may have been fallen into,) whatever judgment they may form concerning my supposed theological errors.

As to any approval I have expressed of the Improved Version, I am fully satisfied I have never expressed it to the extent the above assertion implies, and for this sound reason, because I never felt it, and have often expressed the contrary.

When I spoke of it to the respondents, I confined the remark, I believe, wholly, to such parts of it as had no relation whatever to subjects of controversy, or points of faith. For, before they mentioned the Improved Version to me, I was fully aware of the anxiety with which they were looking for *fresh subjects of accusation*. They may have forgotten this, *but I never shall, while the faculty of memory lasts*. Yet can I truly say, I freely forgive them, and presume not to question, much less to arraign the purity of their motives in so doing. The intent might have been good, and yet the tendency of such inquisitorial pretensions highly pernicious and injurious to that very cause which they would support.

"The committee several times expressed its disapprobation with T. F.'s distinction, which you, [the committee on my appeal] must have several times

remarked, of the man Christ Jesus, as separate and distinct from the godhead, or from the word which is said to have been in the beginning,—to have been with God,—and to have been God. John i. 1. Likewise to have taken, or become flesh, and dwelt among us. v. 14.” If I have ever used any language that implies *a wider distinction* than the language that Christ himself, the evangelists and apostles *have* used concerning him, it was unintentional; and wherever or whenever it can be proved that I have so done, either verbally or in writing, I shall be ready to retract the same, *confess my error*, and endeavour to be more scriptural and guarded for the future.

So far I can meet you with sincerity and with a good conscience, *but I dare not engage farther, whatever may be your judgment concerning me.*

“We do not wish,” say the respondents, “to call in question the propriety of the principle, *that no man is bound to accuse himself*, as an axiom of civil and national jurisprudence; but considering that the foundations on which religious communities are established, are in their nature very different to those systems of policy, by which states are regulated, or held together, we do not conceive that that principle ought to operate to the annulling *this*, which in our present opinion is equally sound and rational.

“Every person, who is a member of a society, bonded together by the belief or profession of *certain religious tenets or opinions*, is amenable to that Society, or its regularly constituted authorities, for the coincidence of his opinions, with those by which the Society is so united, or distinguished.”

That I consider myself amenable to the rules of the Society, the *lex scripta*, my appearance before you as an appellant, is sufficient evidence; but if this principle, which in the present opinion of the respondents, is so sound and rational, is intended to

be extended so far as to authorize overseers in any Meeting to require of their fellow-members to receive their construction of texts of Scripture, when the voice of conscience, and a regard to truth and sincerity *forbids such compliance*; I do say, it would be *an intolerable, ecclesiastical tyranny*, injurious to the best interests of the Society, and inimical to the cause of *scriptural truth*, which can never flourish long in a state of vigour and purity, unless the rights of private judgment *are not only tolerated, but encouraged*.

That the proper constitution of a Christian church upon the apostolic model, is in its nature and foundations, essentially different from systems of civil and national jurisprudence, I readily grant. And the great point upon which this distinction rests, is so plainly defined by our great Master, *the appointed head over all things to the church*, that I cannot well avoid calling your attention to it, as of supreme importance to be kept in view, by all who would be his disciples. "Ye know," said Jesus, "that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Matt. xx. 25. 6. 7.

"We do not attempt however to justify the propriety of any member of such society," say the respondents, "calling in question the soundness of the tenets of his fellow-professor, *without sufficient cause*; but in case any one should thus interfere, it remains with the constituted authorities of the society to decide on the strength and propriety of the *grounds* of his *interference*. Such, we apprehend, is (with submission) part of the present business of this committee, rather than to discuss whether we could have any right to interrogate T. F. at all." Whatever

may have been the design of the respondents [or their counsel] in advancing such a plea as this, I can, without difficulty perceive, that under it a very severe repression of the rights of private judgment may be carried on, against the open profession of scriptural truth, expressed in scriptural language, whilst a mere man of the world, may escape censure, who “pursues the acquisition of wealth, with a step as steady as time, and an appetite as keen as death;” and at the same time a real lover of truth may be expelled as a mere *scripturarian*, for the open, but honest profession of his sentiments.

There are no doubt articles of faith, of primary and fundamental importance; but if those only which are of pure Christian origin are valuable, let them be looked for in the New Testament, and let the same sacred record be searched, for the conditions of religious fellowship, by which Christian societies ought to be united. In such an enquiry, diligently and impartially made, these will be found to be few, plain, and easy of comprehension, free from metaphysical subtleties, and in every respect worthy of the unquestionably divine origin of our common faith, fitted to the state of man, under every clime, and tending to improve his condition and elevate his character, in every stage of civilization, from the Indian who lives in his native forests, to those who have made the greatest advances in the arts and sciences.

When I had read the above address to the committee, I delivered the same to them, and then observed that with their permission, to shew how far William Penn was from approving such intolerant maxims, as the respondents had uniformly acted upon, I would now read to them the following passages from his Works. Viz.

“The enemies of light may be as rhetorical as they please upon the excess or presumption of some, bolder than wise, and more zealous than knowing,

but if they had nothing to lose by the discovery, they would never be the enemies of a Christian search. It is to be feared, such get that obedience and subjection by a blind devotion, which no man could yield them upon better information; and is it reasonable that men of that stamp should secure their empire by the ignorance of the people? Ignorance ought to be the mother of devotion with none, but those that cannot be devout upon better terms. It is the glory of a man that he is religious upon reason, and that his duty and (Lev. xxii. 18. 29.) sacrifice are not blind or forced, but free and reasonable. Truth upon knowledge, though vexed with schism, wise and good men will chuse before ignorant religion, and all its superstitious effects, with uniformity."—Vol. I. p. 792.

"Conscience, in the best sense of the word, has ever been allowed to be a bond upon men in all religions; but that religion, whoever holds it, which under pretence of authority, would supersede conscience, and instead of making men better, the end of religion, make them worse by confounding all sense and distinction betwixt good and evil, and resolving all into an implicit faith, and blind obedience unto the commands of a visible guide and judge is false; it cannot be otherwise. For to admire what men do not know, and to make it a principle not to inquire, is the last mark of folly in the believer, and of imposture in the imposer. To be short, a Christian implies a man, and a man implies conscience and understanding; but he that has no conscience nor understanding, as he has not, that has delivered them up to the will of another man, is no man, and therefore no Christian.

"I do beseech you, Protestants of all sorts, to consider of the danger of this principle, with respect to religion. Of old it was the fool that said in his heart there is no God. But now, upon this principle,

men must be made fools, in order to believe there is one. Shall folly, which is the shame, if not the curse of man, be the perfection of a Christian? Christ indeed, has advised us to become as little children, but never to become such fools; for as the proverb is, this is to be led by the nose, and not by our wits. You know that God hates the sacrifices of fools. Eccles. v. 1. 'I will pray with the spirit and the understanding also,' saith the apostle. 1 Cor. 14. Let us commend that testimony, which we believe to be true, to the consciences of men, and let them have the gospel privilege of examination. Error only, loses upon trial. If this had been the way to Christianity, with reverence be it spoken, God had not made our condition better, but worse; for this translates our faith and dependence upon God, to man; and the possibility, if not probability, of man's erring, exposes us to a greater insecurity than before: for where I never trusted, I never could be deceived; but if I must abandon my own sense and judgment, and yield myself up to the faith and authority of another, (to say no more of the blindness and lameness of such belief and devotion) what security can I have, that the man or men whom I trust, may not err and deceive me? And that deceit is irreparable.

"Again, since man is a reasonable creature, and that the more reasonable he is in religion, the nearer to his own being he comes, and to the wisdom and truth of his Creator, that did so make him: a religion without reason, imposed by an unaccountable authority, against reason, sense and conviction, cannot be the religion of the God of truth and reason; for it is not to be thought that he requires any thing that carries violence upon the nature of his creature, or that gives the lie to that reason or sense, with which he first endowed him. In short, either convince my understanding by the light of truth and

power of reason, or bear down my infidelity with the force of miracles: for not to give me understanding, or faith, and to press a submission that requires both, is most unreasonable." Ibid. p. 794.

Two of the respondents now asserted, that I had acknowledged to them, that I *much approved*, the "Improved Version of the New Testament," as it was called, and that I extended this admission, to *the notes also*. I assured the committee they must have mistaken my meaning. Before they mentioned this subject to me, I was aware of the necessity of expressing myself cautiously before them, lest the import of my words should be misunderstood and misrepresented. All the approval I had expressed to them, respecting it, was confined to such passages, as had nothing to do with matters of controversy. Many of these were, I thought, more correctly rendered, and more intelligible to the capacities of children, for which reason, I frequently preferred reading it in my family, to the common version. As to the objections they made to the notes, a Bible laying on the table, I shewed them the Athanasian creed, prefixed to the authorised version, which was, I thought, much more objectionable, than the notes they disapproved in the Improved Version. They are, however, I observed, all given fairly, and candidly, *as notes*, and not out of their place, so as to impose upon the unlearned, and uninformed, as the notes are given in the received version, at the top of each chapter, *as if they had been written by the sacred writers*. Some of these have very little analogy to the text, as one proof of which I would mention, that several of them are expressly calculated to hold up the institution of what is commonly called the Lord's Supper, as if it was, as adopted by the Church of England, of apostolic authority, and instituted by Christ himself.

Yet you will agree with me, no such thing can be justly deduced from the text. These notes it was well known, were added by King James's translators, and they ought, like all other notes, to be so plainly distinguished from the text, that no person might suppose them to have been written by the sacred writers, nor the marginal references neither, which are also of the nature of notes, and some of them most strangely selected.

I then read to the committee the following texts, as rendered in "the received version," and in "the Improved Version," to shew the great superiority of the latter, as giving a correct transcript of a precept of Christ, viz. Mat. vi. 25. vi. 31. vi. 34. x. 19. Mark xiii. 11. in all which, the received version renders the precept, "Take no thought," &c. and in Luke xii. 11, "Take ye no thought," &c. inculcating indolence of mind, instead of such attention of mind, as the comparative importance of the occasions for it, spoken of in those texts, justly call for. The Improved Version renders the passage in just conformity to that divine wisdom, which dictated the reiterated precept, "Take no *anxious* thought," &c. And in thus rendering the greatly important precept, the editors are amply justified. There is no Latin version, that I have seen, which renders these texts otherwise. Jerome renders Mat. vi. 25. &c. *Ne solliciti sitis*. Castalione, *Ne este solliciti*.

The advantage of rendering Mat. xi. 20, and Mark iii. 21, in the Improved Version by substituting the word "reprove" for "upbraid," I observed, might be thought unimportant, but I considered it an improvement, and was gratified a few days ago, by one of my children pointing it out, at an early age, to make such observations.

The propriety of rendering Luke xxiii. 32. as it stands in the Improved Version, was not question-

ed, for in the received version, Jesus is described as a malefactor, "And there were also two *other* malefactors, led with him to be put to death." In the Improved Version it is, "And two others, who were malefactors, were led with him to be put to death." The erroneous rendering of Acts xx. 28, in the received text, was fully admitted by Luke Howard, on my reading it, as given in the Improved Version, "Feed the church of the Lord, which he hath purchased with his own blood," for he observed, that was well known to be the true reading of the text, long before that version was thought of. I could not controvert this, for Chrysostom and Athanasius, the great patrons of orthodoxy in the 4th century, reprobated such a rendering of this text, as is still retained in the authorised version, viz. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In the received version, 1 Cor. xvi. 22, is thus rendered, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha." After reading this text, I observed, it was very ill calculated to convey information to the mere English reader. It was, I thought, much better given in the Improved Version thus, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be separated from you." Luke Howard made no objection to this rendering of the text, but observed, that it did not include a translation of the Greek word "Maranatha." (a)

In the received version, I observed, that Eph. iv. 32, is erroneously rendered, "Even as God, *for*

(a) I should have added, that the Improved Version renders it after Wakefield, "*Our Lord cometh.*" With, or without which, the text includes most emphatically an implied precept of apostolic authority, not to separate persons from religious fellowship, who do in sincerity love the Lord Jesus. Love to Christ, is made the criterion of fitness for Christian fellowship, and not an agreement upon mysterious points of doctrine.

Christ's sake, has forgiven you," being perhaps the most gross perversion of a plain text of scripture, which its translators have fallen into. The Improved Version renders it thus, "As God also, *through Christ*, hath forgiven you," in conformity to all the Greek *M. S.* and the true meaning of the Greek preposition *ev*; as well as to the Latin versions by Jerome and others, and to the English versions by Cranmer, Purver, Newcome, Wakefield, and every other that I have noticed, the received text alone excepted. God is never said in the genuine text of the scriptures, to have been rendered placable, or to forgive men their trespasses, *for Christ's sake*, or for any other consideration, than their repentance, and his own mercy and goodness. [Yet is this corrupt text quoted in the last Yearly Meeting Epistle, without one word to point out the injurious and unscriptural notion, it is calculated to convey.] (*b*)

Having read to the committee the foregoing ex-

(*b*) To evince how important a new translation of the Christian scriptures, in the English language, has long been deemed, by persons of real judgment, I will quote the opinion of "the Rev. and learned A. Blackwall," from the 2nd vol. of "The Sacred Classics, Defended and Illustrated." It was published in 1731, after his decease, and furnishes ample proof, that he was far from being tainted with such notions, as are deemed heterodox in Trinitarian churches. Yet he says, p. 21 of the preface, "A new translation can give no offence, to people of sound judgment, and consideration; because, every body conversant in these, and unprejudiced, must acknowledge, that there was less occasion, to change the old version, into the present, than to change the present, into a new one. Any scholar that compares them, will find that the old one, though amended by this that we now use, in several places, *is yet equal to it in very many, and superior in a considerable number.*"

"The famous Robert Stephens did good service to religion and learning," says he, p. 125, "by many of his labours; and intended no harm, by his division of the New Testament into chapters and verses, as we have them at present. The reader," Blackwall adds, "will be pleased with the clear account Mr. Locke gives of this matter, whose words I put down, because none of my own can express the thing so emphatically. 'One great inconvenience, that the New Testament labours under, in its present form, is, its improper division into

tracts, I addressed them to the following effect: I have, my Friends, but little more to add,' and I can truly say, it has been a real concern to me, to have already occupied so much of your time, but it has principally arisen from the introduction of additional accusations by the respondents, instead of confining themselves, as they ought to have done, to those specific charges, which were first alleged against me. I therefore felt myself called upon to reply to these, in justice to myself, to the cause of truth, and of pure scriptural Christianity. For if I know any thing of my own heart, I can sincerely assure you, that I love truth, and especially religious truth, much better than I do my own apprehensions concerning it. I am far from thinking I have any exclusive means of becoming acquainted with her. The longer I live, the more confined, and limited, does the little that even wise and good men know with certainty, appear to me, in comparison with the full extent of religious knowledge, of which the scriptures speak. They contain much of this kind, which I never imagined myself capable of comprehending. But they are also richly strewed with gems, that lie, as it were, on the surface. The gospel was to be preached to the poor, and therefore its essential truths, and fundamental doctrines, were adapted to the capacities

chapters and verses; whereby they are so chopped and minced, and stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses for distinct aphorisms; but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of their strength and coherence, and the light that depends on it.' Preface to St. Paul's Epistles."

"It is with pleasure, and a just veneration," says the Rev. A. Blackwall, p. 161, "to the memory of our learned and judicious translators, that I acknowledge their version in the main, to be faithful, clear, and solid. But no man can be so superstitiously devoted to them, [that is, no competent judge] but must own, that a considerable number of passages are weakly, and imperfectly, *and not a few, falsely rendered.*"

of those to whom they were addressed. They are, for the most part, simple, plain, and easy of comprehension. For openly professing my views of these, as was my right and duty, have I been disowned.

There has however been one recent occasion, on which I have met, not only three of the respondents, but many, if not the greater part, of the Friends of Ratcliff Meeting, with almost unmixed satisfaction. (c) It was at a public meeting, held at Black-

(c) I said "almost," for I cannot express my full approbation, powerful as the torrent of eloquence was, which "assailed our intellectual vision," on that occasion. Some expressions even in the "report and address of the provisional committee" are, I think, liable to much stronger objections than occurred to me on its being read. It professes to give "a distinct explanation" of the object of the Bible Society. This is stated to be, "the unlimited circulation, *without note or comment*, of those oracles, which *alone* contain the secret of peace on earth, and of *happiness in heaven*." We are afterwards told, "Its operations have been in *strict and jealous* conformity with its principles,—the distribution of the Bible *ONLY*, *without a syllable of explanation or commentary*; and this maxim," they add, "*it has inflexibly observed*." Now what do these distinct assertions import? That the contents of the volume they distribute are as nearly as possible, what the sacred writers wrote, *and nothing more*. Yet what is the plain fact? In the English language they distribute the received version, with all its errors on its head; its modern and injudicious division into chapters and verses,—its *authorized notes* at the heads of the chapters,—its *marginal readings, and references*, which are of the nature of *explanatory comments on the text*, and give us the ideas of King James's translators, concerning its import, and that of supposed parallel passages, but not those of the evangelists and apostles.

I would willingly hope the versions of the New Testament in foreign languages, which *are* going on, under the patronage of the British and Foreign Bible Society, will be prepared rather from Griesbach's corrected Greek text, than from our received version. And if so, I cannot understand why our countrymen should not equally partake of the advantages of an improved version of the Christian Scriptures. On these, or such like principles, the triumphs of the Bible Society may "last for ever!" As one of its eloquent advocates very justly observed,—"*Its existing patrons may decay. its scenes of action may vary, and the particular circumstances under*

wall, (Oct. 15, 1812) for instituting the East London Auxiliary Bible Society. At that Meeting many excellent, sound and liberal sentiments were expressed, which breathed, according to my ideas, the genuine spirit of Christianity. These were warmly, and I have no doubt sincerely, applauded by those Friends generally. I marked this expression of their feelings with attention, and yet those sentiments are in my mind irreconcilably opposed to the principles whereon their proceedings against me are founded. (d)

I cannot sit down without again entering my protest, against your deciding between the respondents and myself, in any degree, upon their supplementary accusations. The injustice of putting a man upon his trial on certain charges, and during the investi-

which it acts, *may all be changed*; [its adherence to the version of a particular sect among the rest] but, the universal influence and unlimited honours of the Holy Scriptures, its acknowledged object, are marked with perpetuity. 'The hills may pass away, and the mountains be removed;' nations may flourish and decay: empires may rise and fall; worlds may be created and destroyed; but '*the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*'" Proceedings, see p. 29.

(d) "If, with the New Testament model before us," observed the Rev. J. Owen on this occasion, "we had to form for ourselves a national church, [as was the case with the reformers, however differently they acted] we should consider it our duty, a duty imposed upon us by the strongest considerations, both of justice and policy, to make the terms of communion *as broad as possible*, in order that all the subjects of the state might be comprehended within the pale of its religious establishment. We should regret the necessity of drawing the line in such a manner, as to leave any portion of our brethren in a state of conscientious separation from the national communion. Now, the principle which would lead to a perfect union, ought surely to be considered as encouraging the nearest approximation that can be made to it. Despairing, therefore, as I fear we must do, of *uniformity in sentiment*, we should, at least, maintain, as far as we can accomplish it, *unity of spirit*; and while we regret the imperfection of our attainments in the progress towards union, nevertheless, whereunto we have attained, we should walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." Ibid. p. 49.

gation of these, adducing other accusations against him, has been openly admitted, not by the committee collectively, I am aware, but by several of its members. And I feel a strong persuasion, you will unite in judgment upon this point, and that when you come to consider the evidence before you, it will appear, that such has been the manner in which I have been treated. The minutes of the Meeting, with the admission of the respondents, that the first minute of the Meeting concerning me, related to two points, and to two only, sufficiently establish the fact. And I trust you will be of opinion, that the judgment of the Monthly Meeting ought to be reversed, either because the existing rules do not authorize disownment for such causes as are alleged in the record, or that my offences are not correctly described, or lastly, that the proceedings have not been strictly accordant with the true spirit of the discipline, and of gospel order.

I hope you will accept my sincere thanks, and hearty acknowledgments, for the patient attention, with which you have heard my defence. I need not repeat the causes from which the great length to which it has extended, has arisen. But I will add, that I do not intend to trespass farther on your patience, in reply to what the respondents may offer; unless it should appear to me to call more loudly upon me, than much that I have replied to, I shall feel no inclination to rise again. But before I sit down, I would request your attention, to a short extract, or two, from a number of the Philanthropist, which lies on the table.

It is a work, the general tenor and tendency of which, I have, from its commencement, observed with increasing satisfaction. The editor of it most of the committee must know to be a highly respectable member of the Society. He is a man of great talents, and employs them with unwearied diligence

and assiduity to enlighten, improve and benefit his fellow-creatures, in various ways. Nor is this work, among the least beneficial of his benevolent and commendable efforts. What then is the spirit which this work inculcates, with increasing energy and effect? That of the most liberal encouragement of the rights of private judgment. I know not by whom the article to which I am about to refer, was written. I shall read two quotations from it only; the first is from Dr. Campbell, Vol. II. p. 209. Viz.

“ ‘ So far am I from being afraid of exposing Christianity, by submitting it to the test of reason ;’ says the Dr. (in his Dissertation on Miracles, p. 233) ‘ so far am I from judging this a trial, which it is by no means fitted to endure, that I think, on the contrary, the most violent attacks that have been made upon the faith of Jesus, have been of service to it. Yes: I do not hesitate to affirm, that our religion hath been *indebted* to the attempts, though not to the intentions, of its bitterest enemies. They have tried its strength indeed, and, by trying, they have displayed its strength; and that, in so clear a light, as we could never have hoped, without such a trial, to have viewed it in. Let them therefore write, let them argue; and when arguments fail, even let them cavil against religion as much as they please: I should be heartily sorry, that ever in this island, the asylum of liberty, where the spirit of Christianity is better understood, (however defective the inhabitants are in the observance of its precepts) than in any other part of the Christian world; I should, I say, be sorry, that in this island *so great a disservice* were done to religion, as to check its adversaries, in any other way, than by returning a candid answer to their objections. I must at the same time acknowledge, that I am both ashamed and grieved, when I observe any friends of religion, betray so great a diffidence in the goodness of their cause, (for to this

diffidence it can only be imputed,) as to show an inclination for recurring to more forcible methods.’’

The other passage is from the works of the Rev. Conyers Middleton, D. D. Principal Librarian of the University of Cambridge, Vol. II. p. 312, “This is a most important passage,” says this writer in the *Philanthropist*, “of which, every sentence *deserves to be written in letters of gold.*” I cannot finish better, than with such a passage.—Viz.

“ ‘I cannot think it agreeable,’ says Dr. Middleton, ‘either to reason, or religion, to punish even such as are hardy enough, to call in question, the reality of revelation itself; for it is the greatest weakness and absurdity to think, that truth can ever be hurt by any examination whatsoever: it may be oppressed a while by faction, stifled by power; but in a free debate, as in free air and exercise, it always regains its strength and vigour: controversy to truth, is like a gentle wind to trees; it shakes the head, but fastens the root. Truth is naturally so amiable, that wherever it is exposed to view, it necessarily draws all to admire it; and the more it is exposed, the more strongly it attracts. Where artifice, indeed, and fraud prevail in the stead of it, there all inquiry must industriously be discouraged, as a dangerous and fatal enemy; sure to detect and expose the cheat: and wherever it is discouraged, there is always reason to suspect some latent imposture: now, as sure as truth and falsehood are contrary to each other, so sure it is, that the same method of treating them, cannot possibly be of service to both.

“ ‘As far as my experience has reached, either in ancient or modern history, there is not an instance on record, where a fair examination has ever done harm to a good cause. The attacks on Christianity, urged on by its warmest enemies, always turn to its advantage; they engage the clergy to study and

search into the true grounds of it; keep them in breath and exercise; and train them, by constant discipline, to be able champions and defenders of it: they clear religion itself, of all the rust and rubbish, which by the negligence, or the art of its managers, it may have contracted: and above all, they enforce, and lay open the genuine proofs of it; which by time itself, naturally grow languid and ineffectual; till a new debate, like a new publication, sends them fresh again into the world, in their original force and lustre.

“ ‘ It is, then, my firm principle and persuasion, that a free inquiry into all points of religion, is always useful and beneficial; and, for that reason, never to be punished, or prohibited. It opens the minds, and reforms the manners of the people; makes them reasonable, sociable, governable; easy to such as differ from them, and as little scandalized at the different opinion, as the different complexion of their neighbour; whereas, the restraint of this liberty, and the imposition of systems and articles, that must not be called in question, nourishes a churlish spirit of bigotry, uncharitableness, enthusiasm, which no civil power can moderate; a spirit that has so oft involved mankind in wars and bloodshed, and by turns endangered the ruin of every Christian country in the world.’ ” Ibid. p. 225—226.

The respondents being called on to reply, one of them observed, that he did not know, that they had much more to offer to the committee, but they inclined to read some passages which they had selected from the writings of some of our early Friends, to shew what their sentiments were. The first they adduced, was from p. 415 of “ Fox’s Doctrinals.” It may serve to shew, that in the title page of a tract, in which George Fox professes to “ testify against” all such “ by-names,” as are not applied to Christ in the scriptures, he has transgressed his

own rule. I need not say more in this place, as I shall quote the whole of the passage hereafter, with the context.

The next passage was from p. 1009 of the same vol. It shews that Fox quoted the well known corrupted text 1 John v. 7. after this manner, "And there are three which bear witness, or record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these are one." Yet he did not deduce the usual Calvinistic inferences from this text, if he did deem it authentic. For instead of dilating on the necessity of a vicarious atonement, he describes, just afterwards, transgression and obedience, as mere personal acts, on which the approbation, or displeasure of God solely depends.

The next passage read by the respondents, was from the 3rd ch. of Barclay's Catechism, Works, Vol. I. p. 214, viz. "Was not Jesus Christ in being before he appeared in the flesh? What clear scriptures prove this, against such as *erroneously* assert the contrary?" In reply to this question, Barclay quotes Micah v. 2, and John i. 1, 2, 3, which the respondents read: but how they understood these texts, they did not explain.

The 4th passage the respondents read, was from the same page, viz. "These are very clear, that even the world was created by Christ, but what scriptures prove the divinity of Christ, against such as *falsely* deny the same?" Barclay gives John i. 1, Rom. ix. 5, Phil. ii. 6, 1 John v. 20, as a reply to this question. These were read by the respondents, but the proper question is, what is their true scriptural import? And are they rightly rendered in the received version? The three last I believe are not. As to Rom. ix. 5, it is evident the early Christian writers did not understand these words as spoken of Christ. See Dr. Clarke's Scrip. Doctrine, p. 85, &c. The words should, I have no doubt, be read,

“ God who is over all, be blessed for ever,” in conformity to the same apostle’s language, in the same Epistle i. 25, 2 Cor. i. 3, xi. 31, Eph. i. 3, &c. Newcome renders Phil. ii. 6, “ Who [Christ] being in the form of God, did not esteem it a prey to be like God.” The meaning is, I suppose, “ he did not make an ostentatious display of his miraculous powers.” See the note on the whole passage, in the “ Improved Version.”

The common rendering of 1 John v. 20, appears to be palpably erroneous. It renders the Greek preposition *ev*, “ even in,” which is in all the old English versions of this text, that I have seen, translated *by* or *through* his Son, &c. and Jerome’s Latin version is thus, “ *Et scimus; quoniam filius Dei venit: et dedit nobis sensum ut cognoscamus verum Deum: et scimus in vero filio ejus. Hic est verus Deus, et vita eterna.*” “ And we know, because the Son of God came, and gave us understanding, that we may know *the true God*, and we are in *his true Son*. Here is the true God [known] and eternal life.” The sense of the passage in either of these readings, is clear, and consistent with the general tenor of scripture, but in the received version far otherwise, especially as it is frequently understood.

The 5th passage the respondents read, was the following, from Barclay’s 2nd Prop. § 5, “ Hence he [Christ] is fitly called the mediator betwixt God and man. For having been with God from all eternity, being himself God, and also in time, partaking of the nature of man: through him is the goodness, and love of God, conveyed to mankind, and by him again, man receiveth and partaketh of these mercies.” In the preceding paragraph, to which this refers, the Father is described by Barclay, as “ the infinite and most wise God,—the foundation, root, and spring of all operation,—that infinite and incomprehensible Fountain of life and

motion," who "operateth in the creatures by his own eternal word, and power." From whence I conclude, Barclay considered Christ "the first-born of every creature," as the agent, the effect, but not the cause of God's love to mankind.

Their 6th passage is from Barclay's 13th Prop. § 2nd, as follows, "So then, as there was the outward visible body and temple of Jesus Christ, which took its origin from the Virgin Mary; there is also the spiritual body of Christ, by and through which, he that was the word in the beginning with God, and was and is God, did reveal himself to the sons of men in all ages, and whereby men in all ages come to be made partakers of eternal life, and to have communion and fellowship with *God and Christ*." This is to distinguish between the man Christ Jesus, and that divine power which dwelt in him, as plainly as I have done, although in different terms.

The 7th passage the respondents read, is the one inserted in p. 150, with, I believe, part of the four following paragraphs, the general import of which I have noticed in p. 151, &c.

After these, they read the following profession of faith in *God*, Christ, and *the Holy Spirit* from Penn's Works, Vol. II. p. 66—67. "We do believe in *the One only, holy, God Almighty*, who is an eternal spirit, *the Creator of all things*. And in *one Lord Jesus Christ*, his only Son, and express image of his substance, who took upon him flesh, and was in the world; and in life, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and mediation, perfectly did, *and does continue to do the will of God*, to whose holy life, power, mediation and blood, we only ascribe our sanctification, justification, redemption and perfect salvation.

"And we believe in *one Holy Spirit*, that proceeds and breathes from the Father and the Son, as the life and virtue of both the Father and the Son, a mea-

sure of which is given to all to profit with; and *he that has one, has all, for those three are one*; who is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, God over all, blessed for ever. Amen."

In the preceding page, Penn challenges his Trinitarian opponent, to bring him "one Scripture," that on such a subject, authorizes the use of "such a phrase *as distinct person*, or that says, "*I and my Father are two*, instead of *I and my Father are one.*" 2ndly. If he will but bring me one piece of antiquity, for the first 200 years, that used any such expression. 3dly. And if he can deny that the popish schoolmen, through the assistance of the Aristotelian (or infidel) philosophy, were not the grandfathers and promoters of such like monstrous terms, and uncouth phrases, I will be contented to take the shame upon me, of denying *proper, apt, and significant phrases*. But till then, I will tell him, that if the son of God did purchase our salvation distinctly from the Father, the Father was not concerned in our salvation, *but Christ only*; and if he did so purchase it, as *God the Son* (distinct from the Father) then God the Son, (by his principles) cannot be the same with God the Father; and all the earth, with all their idle sophisms and metaphysical quiddities, shall never be able to withstand the conclusion to be two Gods; otherwise, if the purchase was by God the Son, then God the Father was concerned as well as God the Son, *because the same God*. If not, then either Christ's godhead was not concerned in the purchase, *or there must be two Gods*; so that which he calls a personality, distinct from the essence, could not do it, and if the divine essence did it, then the Father and Spirit did it, as well as the Son, because the same individual, eternal essence." The man who wrote thus in an "Apology for the Principles of the People called Quakers," first pub-

lished in 1692, could not be a Trinitarian in any proper sense of the term.

Yet the next passage adduced by the respondents will shew, that William Penn had not wholly discarded the term 'Trinity, as unfit to designate a scriptural doctrine. In reply to an accusation that "the Quakers deny the Trinity," he says, "Nothing less, they believe in the holy three, or Trinity of Father, Word and Spirit, *according to Scripture*, and that these three are truly and properly one; of one nature, as well as will. But they are very tender of quitting Scripture terms and phrases, for schoolmen's; such as *distinct and separate persons*, and *subsistences*, &c. are; from whence people are apt to entertain, gross ideas and notions of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And they judge, that a curious inquiry into those high and divine relations, and other speculative subjects, though never so great truths in themselves, tend little to godliness and less to peace, which should be the chief aim of true Christians. And therefore they cannot gratify that curiosity in themselves, or others; speculative truths being in their judgment, to be sparingly and tenderly declared, *and never to be made the measure and condition of Christian communion*. For besides that Christ Jesus hath taught them other things, the sad consequence in all times, of superfining upon Scripture texts, do sufficiently caution and forbid them. Men are too apt to let their heads outrun their hearts, and their notion exceed their obedience, and their passion support their conceits; instead of a daily cross, a constant watch, and an holy practice. The despised Quakers desire this may be their care, and *the text their creed, in this, as in all other points*; preferring self-denial, to opinion, and *charity*, to knowledge, according to that great Christian doctrine, 1 Cor. 13." Vol. II. p. 783.

How the respondents could have imagined such a

passage as the above did not expressly condemn the whole principle of their proceedings, I cannot imagine. I believe they also read the next § of the same tract, the purport of which is already sufficiently noticed in the foregoing pages.

The next passages they read, were from some "Queries concerning Christ" in Penington's Works, Vol. II. p. 16—17. Viz. "To whom do the names and titles *Jesus* and *Christ*, in the first place, belong? Do they belong to the body which was taken by him, or to him who took the body? The body hath its nature and properties, and the eternal word, or Son of God. (the pure, spotless lamb, the fountain of innocency,) its nature and properties. Now the query is, "which was *the appointed Saviour of the Father?* Which was *the anointed of the Father*, chiefly and in the first place? Whether the body prepared, or he for whom the body was prepared, to do the will, and offer up the acceptable sacrifice in?"

From the above passage it is apparent that Penington considered the Son of God, as having received his qualification *from the Father* to become the appointed Saviour. The next query which the respondents read, will shew this still more clearly. Viz. "What was that which saved people outwardly from their outward infirmities and diseases, while Christ was on earth in that body? Was it the body, or the life, power and spirit *of the Father*, within the body, and manifest through the body?"

At the production of the next passage, I was still more surprised. It is this. Penington asks, "Are not the children and he [Christ] of one? Are not he and they *of the same stock?* (Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, Heb. ii. 11.) Is it not from thence that he is not ashamed to call them brethren, even because he finds the nature, spirit and life of *his Father in them?*"

The three foregoing passages I had quoted in the first

part of an "Appeal to the Society of Friends," published in 1801, p. 21—22, to shew that Isaac Penington attributed "all that even Jesus Christ himself was possessed of, performed or communicated to others, *to the one only true God.*" Yet are they now adduced, as if they could establish the contrary conclusion! The respondents also read this passage, which follows the above, viz. "What makes a child to God? Is it not the being begotten of the Father, and being born of the spirit? And that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. Now mark: have we the denomination and relation with Christ, from that which is spiritual, and hath Christ himself the name from, or because of the body of flesh? Nay, nay; the name Christ *was from the anointing which was in the body*, which ran into and filled the vessel. It is true, the body, in and by the union, partakes of *his name*; but the name belongs chiefly, and most properly, *to the treasure in the vessel.*"

Quaintly as this is expressed, it does not, in any proper sense, ascribe divinity to the person of Christ, but only to the spirit or power of the Father, which dwelt in him. The next passage adduced by the respondents was this: "Who was it that said, I am the resurrection and the life; Was it not Christ? And what did he say it concerning? Did he say it concerning the body, or did he say it [asks Penington, as if that was in his mind the only other alternative] concerning *the power and virtue of the Father*, which was in the body? Did he not say it concerning *that*, which had the power of life in it *before it took up the body*, and had also the power of life *while it was in the body.*"

These significant queries concerning Christ exhibit Penington's idea of his pre-existence, as consisting merely in that of "the power and virtue of the Father," to which he ascribes all that Christ did, said, or taught.

The next passage selected by the respondents, is from another tract of Penington's, in the same Vol. p. 26. Viz. "Now the Scriptures do expressly distinguish between Christ and the garment which he wore; between him that came, and the body in which he came; between the substance which was veiled, and the veil which veiled it. *Lo! I come; a body hast thou prepared me.* There is plainly *he*, and the body in which he came. There was the outward vessel, and the inward life. This we certainly know, *and can never call the bodily garment, Christ*, but that which appeared and dwelt in the body. Now if ye, [the "professors," to whom this tract was addressed] know *the Christ* of God, tell us plainly what that is, which appeared in the body? Whether that was not the Christ, before it took up the body, after it took up the body, and for ever.

"For Christ is the Son of the Father; he is the infinite eternal being, One with the Father and with the Spirit, and cannot be divided from either; cannot be any where where they are not, nor can be excluded, from any place, where they are." Ibid. p. 26.

The next passage which the respondents read was from a tract of Isaac Penington's, addressed "to the professors of Christianity." Ibid. p. 7. "What was that Christ called *me*, speaking to Philip? *Hast thou not known me, Philip? Hast thou not seen me?* What dost thou not know *me* after the flesh, after the body. Have I been so long with you, and do you know *me* no better than so? The body is from below; the body *is like one of your's*, (only sanctified by the Father, and preserved without sin;) but I am the same spirit, life and being, with the Father." The next and the last passage adduced by the respondents was from p. 38 of the same Vol. Viz.

"What doth Christ, the shepherd, (the eternal

word, the wisdom, life and power, of the Father,) do for his sheep?"

The answer to this question the respondents did not adduce, nor shall I quote it; but as they selected the 7th question proposed by Penington in this tract, I shall quote the first, with his answer to it, because that may throw some light on the others also. "Quest. 1. Who is the shepherd of the sheep?" That is, the shepherd spoken of in the 10th chap. of John. "Ans. *The wisdom, life and power of the Father, (which dwelleth in, and is manifest through the Son) is the shepherd.* He that is the truth, the way and the life, *he also* is the shepherd, and bishop of the soul."

Quest. 3. "What is the fold of the sheep?"

"Ans. The wisdom, life and power of the Father, even the same that is the shepherd. The Father's hand, wherewith he covers them, wherein he incloseth them, *that is the fold.* For it is the power, wisdom and life, of the Father, which gathereth the sheep, and he gathereth them into his wisdom, into his life; and that is a wall or fold about them." Ib. 38—39.

The respondents did not attempt to explain how any of the above passages, applied to, or supported their accusations, and very soon after they had read them, we signed a paper, acknowledging that we had been fairly and fully heard, by the Quarterly Meeting's committee. We then withdrew, and the committee adjourned soon after. Whether they had more than one sitting, to consider of a report, I do not know, or what time they thought it necessary to take, in deliberating thereon.

On the 15th of the same month, a notice was delivered to me, of which the following is a copy.—"The committee on the appeal of Thomas Foster, against the judgment of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, intend to deliver their report thereon to the Quarterly

Meeting, to be held at this place, at ten in the forenoon, on 2nd day, the 16th instant.

Signed on behalf of the committee,

LUKE HOWARD.

Devonshire House, Houndsditch,

11th Month, 14th, 1812.

To Thomas Foster, appellant in the said case."

QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX.

Held by adjournment 11th Month, 16th, 1812.

Being introduced to a seat near the table, after a short pause, the paper, which the respondents and myself had signed, acknowledging that we had been fully and fairly heard by the committee, on the said appeal was read, and then the following minute, and report. Viz.

"The following report was brought in, and read."

"At a committee, appointed by the Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex, on the appeal of Thomas Foster, against the judgment of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting.

"Committee Room, Devonshire House, 11th Month, 14th 1812.

"Present all the committee except Samuel Hull, absent since the first sitting, and John Hamilton, who was obliged, after constantly attending the sittings of the committee, to leave London this morning.

"To the Quarterly Meeting,

"We, your committee on the appeal of Thomas Foster, against the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff, report, that having heard the appellant, and also the respondents, appointed by the Monthly Meeting,

until both parties acknowledged that they had been fairly and fully heard, and having deliberately investigated and considered the case, we are unitedly of the judgment, that the decision of the Monthly Meeting, in relation to the appellant, should be confirmed.

John Eliot, Jun.
Richard Barrett,
Joseph Allen,
John Row,
John Barrett,
John Bailey,
William Manser,
Luke Howard,

John Sanderson,
Thomas Christy,
Thomas Brewster,
John Coleman,
William Forster,
Josiah Forster,
George Stacey, Jun.
John Bell."

When the report had been read a second time, and the Clerk appeared to be about making a minute thereof, I rose and said, that in the short interval, which had elapsed since the committee's report had been read, I had given it the best consideration in my power, and having so done, sincerely as I lamented the necessity of occupying the time of so large a Meeting, I must say, that I am not satisfied with it.

The Clerk of the Meeting, after a short pause, observed, that although the appellant had expressed dissatisfaction with the committee's report, he had not claimed the right of having the case opened in the Meeting.

I replied, that I had not, because I wished to conform to the mode of procedure, established by the rules and the custom of the Society, and was somewhat uncertain, what the next step should be. If it was to have the appeal read, I requested that might be done, as I did not feel satisfied to wave the right, of being heard in the Meeting.

But as I could not think of troubling such an assembly with the details into which I felt it necessary to go, before the committee, whose patient attention

in hearing them, I should ever readily acknowledge. I had prepared an epitome of the case, for the express purpose of reading it to the Quarterly Meeting, in case their committee should be of opinion, that the decision of the Monthly Meeting ought to be confirmed.

Luke Howard observed, that it was a great relief to his mind, to hear that I had prepared an epitome of the case, to prevent the necessity of entering into the long details, which the committee had heard. It was a mark of attention to the convenience of the Meeting, which he confessed gave him much satisfaction. Some Friends expressed their doubts, of the propriety of my laying before the Meeting, matter which had not been heard by the committee. I informed the Meeting, that in drawing up my intended address, I had endeavoured to condense the arguments I had laid before the committee, and had consequently not expressed myself in the same terms; indeed I had, so far as I found practicable, and advantageous to my cause, purposely varied my arguments; but they nevertheless were intended to establish the same general conclusions, and were for the most part drawn up without any direct reference to the documents, I had laid before the committee of the Quarterly Meeting.

After this, the regulations of the Yearly Meeting for conducting appeals, were read, on the construction of one or two of which, no little difference of opinion was expressed among the most active disciplinarians in the Meeting. On the one side, the literal import of the rule was contended for, on the other, the established practice of the Society, ever since those rules were made. At length it was agreed, that I should be heard, in the manner I proposed.

My appeal, as inserted p. 130—136, was then read by John Coleby, the clerk, and afterwards the

*Is it possible that the Discipline allowed
the appeal being opened before the Yearly
Meeting, after having been decided by
the Quarterly Meeting?*

minutes of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, with the testimony of disownment, as inserted p. 108—114. When these documents had been read, the Clerk informed me, the Meeting was ready to hear any thing I had to offer, I rose and observed, that the difference of sentiment, which had been manifest amongst those who had spoken, since I was admitted into the Meeting, on the rules respecting the order of procedure in cases of appeal, might serve to shew the difficulty there was, in bringing any considerable number of persons to an exact agreement of opinion, on subjects which might appear at first sight, very clear. How much more difficult then, I wished the Meeting to consider, it must be, to attain a uniformity of sentiment, on such subjects, as those were, to which the proceedings against me related? I then read the following address.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

In presenting myself before you as an appellant, after the decision of your committee, which has been read, I am not actuated by any consideration of a private nature. The proceedings of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, on my case, are of such a complexion, as to leave me no cause for regret, that I am no longer in membership with those who approved, promoted, and sanctioned them. Nor is it probable, that the remote consequences of its decision, if unreversed, will ever be of any material import to myself, as an individual.

If it be asked, why then do I appeal? I answer, because I appreciate highly the benefits of religious association, when it is conducted on truly just, and liberal, that is, on Christian principles; and because I believe, the proceedings of which I complain, are founded on opposite principles, and are not sanctioned by the letter, or spirit of the rules of the So-

ciety ; and may, if they are not exposed in their true colours, form a precedent in the administration of the discipline, dangerous to the peace, and deeply injurious to the prosperity, of the Society.

That its reputation is liable to be impaired, by the improper conduct of individual members, will not be questioned. If so, how much more nearly may it not be wounded, when any of its Meetings for discipline, act inconsistently with its established rules, and the precepts of the gospel? The Society, as a collective body, is not only more strictly amenable, for the exemplary and judicious conduct of such Meetings, but, by the existing rules, every Monthly Meeting in the Society, is liable to be called upon, blindly to pin its faith, on the supposed rectitude of all the proceedings of other Meetings, which terminate in disownment. At least, to act, as if they believed them to be so, and that, perhaps, under a full conviction to the contrary.

The power of disownment, in the name, and on behalf of the whole Society, as a collective body, is entrusted by its rules, to every Monthly Meeting, however small, or weak ; and every other Meeting, not merely in Great Britain and Ireland, but throughout North America, is virtually bound, by such decision, during the life of the party. Those who resign their membership, or have never been of the Society, may, on application, be received as members, at the discretion of any Monthly Meeting, where they reside, but not a person disowned. No other Meeting, but that which disowned, is allowed to receive him as a member, not even on the most intimate knowledge, and cordial approval, of his religious character and principles, after a residence among its members, however long, or at a place however distant, from that of the Meeting which disowned him. A confession of " misconduct," to the satisfaction of the Meeting which disowned,

is the appointed atonement, and indispensable condition of restoration to membership. Thus, is a tacit claim to infallibility set up, in favour of all acts of disownment, that are not reversed, by an appeal to a superior Meeting.

These regulations, are however, of *modern date*, and not like the right of appeal, almost co-eval with the existence of the Society. For more than a century, no such shackles on the power of re-admission into membership, were thought necessary to be imposed on Monthly Meetings. Had this still been the case, it is probable, I should have waved the privilege of appeal, as the right of every community, absolutely to decide for itself, on the admission and exclusion of its own members, is so reasonable, that I know not, whether any plea could be valid enough to call it in question. But, when the decision of a small body of men, has the effect of dissolving the bonds of union, not merely between an individual member and themselves, *but between him, and a large Society*; and also of precluding, without their special consent, and recommendation, the possibility of his re-union with any part of such Society, which may hereafter be willing to receive him into membership, the right of appeal becomes proportionably reasonable, and important.

On these grounds, therefore, do I claim your serious attention, to the proceedings against me, which have terminated in disownment. The overseers having paid me two visits, one of them three, reported to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, 12th Month, 19th last, that I “had imbibed, and aided in the propagation of, doctrines contrary to those of the Society.” The evidence whereon they rested this accusation, was, that I had given a few of my friends, some copies of a paper, entitled, “Remarks on the Quakers’ Yearly Epistle, for 1810, by an Unitarian Christian;” secondly, that I was a subscriber to the

“London Unitarian *Book Society*, for promoting *Christian knowledge, and the practice of virtue.*”

With regard to the paper, the overseers alleged, that those Remarks “found fault with the Yearly Meeting Epistle, and they thought, contained sentiments very different from those of Friends.” As to the London Unitarian *Book Society*, after a minute review of its fundamental principles, article by article, as the same are stated in the preface to its Book of Rules, the overseers deliberately and explicitly acknowledged, *that they approved the whole.* And on reading to them my minutes, respecting the manner in which I had asserted the scriptural soundness, and great importance of those principles, they even urged, how unnecessary they thought it was, for me to have made any observations thereon, “*as they did not make any objection to those parts.*”

This admission, so deliberately made, reduces the objection on their part, to an opinion that my being a subscriber to this *Book Society* implies more than an agreement with its fundamental principles. On this ground, the overseers accordingly placed it, saying, they considered me as a subscriber, accountable for all that the preface to its Book of Rules contained. I assured them, it was an approval of its fundamental principles, that induced me to become a subscriber, and that I never imagined myself answerable for any other. That I had not imbibed those principles of late years, but in early life, and that the first strong impression that was made on my mind, concerning their great importance, as Christian doctrines, was by perusing Penn’s *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, where they are so clearly and forcibly stated. That this impression had never been effaced, but had been confirmed, by subsequent enquiry and reflection—had grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength.

The overseers also disclaimed the notion, of Christ

being the second person in the Trinity, as a doctrine never held by Friends, and as wholly unscriptural. After these concessions, I was prepared to expect, instead of an accusation, an acknowledgment from them, that they had formed a mistaken judgment of my sentiments, by listening, to the manifest encouragement of tale-bearing and detraction, to their numerous informants, and prompters of other meetings, whom they refused to name. And the only way, in which I can account for the course they pursued, is to suppose they still continued to act, under the influence of those who incited them to commence these proceedings.

Their whole conduct appeared to me to indicate, that they neither acted upon their own judgment, nor in conformity to the true principles of Christian discipline, the first object of which is, to reclaim and to restore. Had this been the primary end, they aimed at, is it possible they could have acted with so much precipitation? Could they have thought it likely, that their two visits would suddenly convince me of the propriety of renouncing principles, which they knew had been for many years esteemed by me, as greatly important Christian truths, even supposing them to be erroneous? This, no person of serious reflection, and sound understanding, will, I believe, venture to assert. It is, too improbable, and in fact the overseers assigned another reason, for so speedily wishing to lay the matter before the Monthly Meeting, viz. "For the sake of getting it off their shoulders," as they confessed their incompetency to discuss such abstruse subjects, as they had undertaken to treat with me, upon.

The Monthly Meeting declined to recognize their charges in any definite terms, but recorded its being informed, that I had "imbibed, and aided in propagating, some opinions contrary to the principles of

the Society;" and appointed a committee of four Friends, to visit me thereon, and report. In reply to such a charge as the foregoing, I might ask, Who has not? And it would be easy to shew, that approved authors in the Society, have published contradictory, and therefore some erroneous opinions. In proof of which, it may suffice to refer, to the first paragraph of "the chapter on the Christian Religion," p. 32, of Henry Tuke's work on the "Principles of Religion," &c. in which he represents "Adam by his disobedience, as having '*entailed sin and misery on himself, and his offspring*,'" in express contradiction to the doctrine of Barclay, Prop. 4, § 4, which I consider as stating the genuine doctrine of the Society, and of the Scriptures, on this subject, and consequently that the above passage of Henry Tuke's is opposed to both, and I will add, *highly derogatory to the goodness, and justice of God.* (a)

(a) I ought perhaps to say, that I have since seen another edition of this work, in which the following words are substituted in the place of those above quoted, representing man as having by the sin of Adam, "*subjected himself, and his offspring, to sin and misery*," instead of having "*entailed sin and misery on himself, and his offspring*." This amendment gets rid, it is true, of the absurdity of saying a man *entailed* sin and misery, *on himself*. But it leaves the far most material part of the injurious absurdity undiminished, conveying it only in terms less open to detection, but equally at variance with the doctrine of Barclay, and of the Scriptures on this important subject.

I cannot conclude this note, without giving an extract or two from a recent work of George Stacey's, entitled, "Brief Remarks on the State of Man, and his Redemption by Christ." This esteemed elder in the Society, says in this "approved" work: "But this doctrine of *original sin*, or innate depravity, is not a solitary, speculative error: Connected as it is, in the view of many, with our desert of eternal misery, from the first moment of existence, and with the still further opinion, that there are infants, not a few, who actually are excluded from the benefit of Christian redemption, it becomes a fearful doctrine indeed, in its practical effects, or application." p. 8. After shewing the "direct opposition" of this doctrine, with that of Christ, he says, "that sin, being the transgression of law, cannot be transferred by the act of another, nor be imputed to unconscious infancy;

"As on Adam all die, so says Paul
or evidently transfer sin to Adam though he
is not included in the guilt those who have

Yet who ever thought of subjecting Henry Tuke, to censure and disownment, for having imbibed, and aided in propagating, this erroneous and injurious representation of the doctrines of the Society? It is well known he is an approved minister among Friends, and that this work was submitted to the revision, and published under the sanction of the morning meeting of ministers and elders. This may be thought to exonerate him, but it cannot do so, without shifting the responsibility from his shoulders, and placing it with increased weight upon the morning meeting, in exact proportion to the superior estimation, in which the judgment of that body is held, when compared with that of an individual. What this proportion may be, every one may judge for himself, but it must be allowed, that when error is taken under the patronage of authority, it is too apt to be received on that account, and thereby to lull to sleep, that fearless spirit of enquiry, which a genuine love of truth tends to generate, and which is one of the best securities a kind providence has bestowed upon mankind, against innumerable errors and impositions.

The aforesaid committee reported to the Monthly Meeting, held 1st month, 23rd last, that they had paid your appellant two visits, and having then, no farther report to make, they were continued. At the next meeting, on 2nd month, 20th, they made a farther report, in which they say,—

nor can it," adds he, "comport with any idea we can form of Him, *who is goodness itself*, and who has declared, '*the son shall not bear the iniquity of his Father,*' to consign to a state of everlasting dereliction and punishment, that which hath not offended him. And it is not to be forgotten, *that man is still the creature of GOD*, all whose works are in wisdom, and adapted to the purpose for which they are formed." p. 11—12. That is, for purposes of unlimited and ever-during benevolence. When this subject was adverted to, before the Quarterly Meeting's committee, I expressed the satisfaction I had felt at the perspicuous manner in which this subject was treated, by so respectable a member of the Society.

1st. "We have paid him two visits, since our last Meeting, *to no satisfaction.*"

2nd. "We questioned him, on some important points of doctrine, respecting which we had strong ground to believe, his opinions are at variance with those of the Society."

3rd. "To which" interrogatories "he decidedly refused to answer."

4th. "He was also asked, if he were not the author, who assumes the name of *Verax*, which," say they, "he is publicly charged with in print."

5th. "The apparent scope of whose publications is," the said committee affirm, "to prove that our early Friends denied, the eternal divinity of Christ."

6th. "*This*," they say, "*he also refused to answer.*"

7th. "But he avows that he has distributed some papers, entitled '*Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle*,' calling in question the omnipotence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

8th. "And the propriety of applying to him in secret supplication, as professed by the Yearly Meeting, in its Epistle for 1810."

9th. "Also, that he is a member of the Unitarian Society, in which he confesses he has great satisfaction."

10th. "We have," say the committee, "endeavoured to convince him, of the impropriety of his conduct, as a member of our Society; but he is not disposed to allow, that he has acted at all improperly, or inconsistently."

Such are the allegations of the committee, as they stand in their report, which I have divided into separate articles for the convenience of reference, having a few observations to make on them, before I proceed to speak of their reception by the Meeting.

1st. As to the committee's total want of satisfaction in their two last visits, I know not that it was

in my power to prevent it, unless I had acted a part, unworthy of a man, and a Christian.

2nd. In a protestant country, the only mode of questioning persons on important points of doctrine, that is commonly known, is generally called catechising, and is wholly, as it ought to be, devoted to the purposes of imparting religious instruction. It was, with united feelings of surprise, and I trust, of virtuous indignation, that I witnessed the persevering efforts of the Monthly Meeting's committee, to exercise, for far different purposes, such dangerous and unauthorized pretensions to ecclesiastical power. The object they were aiming at, was all along, so manifestly to lay hold of my words, and by means of ensnaring questions, to extend their accusations against me, that I am persuaded they will not, on due consideration, venture to deny it. If they should, however, it must be in the teeth of their own report, which, for so brief a document, contains uncommonly full, and conclusive evidence, upon this point.

They had indeed, for a long period of time, by their own confession, frequently listened to, and therefore encouraged, those dettractive tale-bearers, whom they refused to name, although called upon so to do, in compliance with the most obvious claims of justice, and the positive requisition of an express minute of the Yearly Meeting. Yet, till these proceedings commenced, neither of them ever opened their lips to me on the subject. What was it, after all, that this persevering encouragement of defamation and detraction produced? It should seem, by their own report, not positive evidence against me, on those important points of doctrine, but it generated, as might be expected, in such listeners to back-biting, what they call, and no doubt fancied, "*strong ground to believe*, my opinions [on those subjects] are at variance with those of the Society."

Accordingly, they proceeded to question me, that they might discover, whether the tales they had been in the habit of listening to, without my knowledge, were true, or false. Had they observed the rules of gospel order, and of immutable justice, they would either have long ago sent these defamers to me, or have informed me, who they were, and what they alleged against me. If they had acted on such principles, I should have cheerfully received their visits as well meant endeavours, whether in my mind judicious, or not, to rescue me from the baneful effects of error, which would have entitled them to my respect and gratitude.

But after being accused to the Monthly Meeting, in terms which I consider unwarrantable and unjust, for the same persons, in concert with two others, to proceed to question me, upon points quite foreign to those on which they rested their own accusation, indicates either great ignorance of the plainest principles of justice, or an utter disregard of them. Nor could such pretensions be justified, if they had been confined by the committee to the subjects on which the overseers had accused me. They had either sufficient evidence, without questioning me, or they had not. If they had, it was unnecessary, and implied they were not satisfied with it, too plainly to be creditable to their sincerity, or consistency. If they were not satisfied with the evidence they had been so long in collecting, to resort to such an expedient to supply the defect of it, was equally insidious, and unjustifiable. Look to your religious privileges, Friends, and reflect, I entreat you, and more especially the youth amongst you, on the probable consequences of establishing a precedent, so inimical to the purest precepts of the gospel, so dangerous to the cause of Christian liberty, and the rights of private judgment, and so subversive of the authority of Christ, who forbade his followers to call, in religious matters, any

man master upon earth, "for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

3d and 6th. That my refusal to answer the interrogatories of the committee, should be alleged against me as a crime, in their report, affords the most decisive proof that their ideas of church authority, are rather of Popish, than of Protestant extraction. The candour and correctness with which they have stated their conduct and mine, with relation to these claims, also shews, that they looked for the approbation of their brethren on the avowed exercise of such powers, and to their censure of me, for decidedly refusing to answer their interrogatories. Nor do I question the sincerity of their belief, that such powers may be lawfully, and usefully exercised in a Christian church. As to their motives to action, I have been desirous, as far as possible, of being preserved from judging. It is not my province. But the tendency of their conduct, and the ground of their accusations, it is at once my right, and duty to investigate. Of these I would always be understood to speak, where my censure may be thought most severe, and their conduct most reprehensible.

It was not the firm persuasion of Paul, when he verily thought with himself, that he "ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth," that could justify his cruel persecution of the primitive Christians; much less, could his "having received authority" for that purpose, "from the chief priests." He was, by his own testimony after he became an apostle, in persecuting even unto death, "zealous towards God;" yet it was not a zeal according to knowledge, but he "did it ignorantly in unbelief," and therefore "obtained mercy." Our great Master, for the encouragement of his disciples, foretold the extent of religious delusion over the human mind, in these remarkable expressions. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that *who-*

soever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." If any ask, to what causes is such extreme infatuation to be ascribed? The lip of truth has informed us, as recorded in the following verse.—“ And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known *the Father* nor *me*. John xvi. 2. 3.

4th and 5th. These articles relate to a supplementary accusation, of which I refused on that account to enter into any discussion, with the committee. It may therefore suffice to say, that the judgment they have pronounced concerning the scope of Verax's publications, is not only palpably erroneous, but the very reverse of the truth. If they are disposed to controvert this, and you should sanction their production of fresh charges against me, during the investigation of those which were referred to their consideration, I must say, such a mode of procedure, if attempted in any court of justice in this country, would, I have no doubt, be scouted with indignation. And when it is resorted to, in the exercise of church discipline, it betrays much more of a disposition to censure, and disown, than calmly to inquire, and impartially to decide, upon the just and equitable principles of gospel order.

7th and 8th. With regard to these charges, I have already admitted having given a few of my friends, some copies of a paper, entitled *Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle for 1810*, as I did to the overseers at the first visit they paid me. And I am so far from considering whatever publicity I gave those *Remarks*, as any breach of the rules of the discipline, that I confess to you, those *Remarks* appear to me, a seasonable, temperate and serious vindication of the genuine principles of the Society; particularly of those greatly important doctrines, of the unity and supremacy of God the Father, which the general tenor of the devotional language of the *Yearly Meeting Epistles*, up to the year 1759, published

in 1760, holds forth as its practical doctrines. That such was their actual import, I had long been convinced, and had, in consequence thereof, marked in the margin of my copy of those Epistles, many of the more striking passages, without any idea of preparing a collection of them for the public eye.

But, on reviewing these marginal references, in consequence of the replies of Breviloquus, and of Stanley Pumphrey of Worcester, it struck me, that a collection of the most definite doxologies in the Yearly Meeting's Epistles, from year to year, would exhibit the most authentic, unexceptionable, and conclusive evidence of the real belief of the Society, as a body, and of its actual language, when collectively engaged in the solemn exercise of devotion to the object of its worship, that could possibly be furnished.

With this view, the "Devotional and Doctrinal Extracts" were compiled, and published without any other comment, than a brief explanatory preface, and an Appendix, arranging, under distinct heads, the evidence these extracts appeared to me to afford. After this compilation had been made in *M.S.* down to the year 1759, the editor began to collect the epistles of a later date, which have not, like the former, been published in a volume, when he discovered, much to his surprise, an assertion in the Epistle for 1760, which appeared to him manifestly unscriptural and erroneous, as well as inconsistent with the uniform language of all the preceding epistles. This passage, and a few others, which may be thought to inculcate similar doctrine, for the sake of impartiality, the editor has adduced in the Preface, or in the Appendix, that his readers might have the whole evidence fairly before them.

The general result of this evidence, as it impresses my mind, is, 1st. That there are more than 50 epistles, between the years 1678 and 1810, in which God the Father, is most plainly distinguished from, and as

acting “in,—by,” or “through” Jesus Christ, or, as bestowing blessings upon mankind, “in,—by,” or “through” him.

2ndly. That in above 70 epistles within the same period, the supremacy of the Father, and subordination of the Son, is either expressly asserted, or most plainly implied, by the application of such terms to God, as distinguished from Jesus Christ, as are never ascribed to the latter, by the sacred writers.

3dly. That there are above 90 epistles within the same period of time, in which it is *highly probable* the compilers *always* meant to designate, God the Father *only*, when they used such terms as are expressly ascribed to the Supreme Being, and never in these epistles, or in the Scriptures, to Christ, the occasional application of the term *Lord* alone excepted.

4thly. That in more than 30 of these Epistles, prayer or supplication is expressly addressed to God the Father, in such definite terms as are totally inapplicable to Jesus Christ, and can only, in fair construction, be understood to designate his God and our God,—“the *One* benevolent and all-powerful Parent of the universe,—the Preserver of men, who hears the prayer of the humble.”

5thly. That in more than 50 of these epistles, “glory,—honour,—praise,—blessing,—thanksgiving, dominion,—worship,”—or “adoration,” are ascribed to God the Father, in such exalted and definite terms, as of right belong only unto him, the sole object of supreme religious worship, none of which, are scripturally applicable to Jesus Christ, but only, unto the “Father and Fountain of all grace, mercy and goodness,”—“the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God.”

Such is the evidence, a collective and impartial view of the devotional language of our predecessors in religious profession, appears to me to furnish, concerning their belief in “God, even the Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the Almighty Parent of the universe.

Soon after the second visit from the overseers, being six weeks before they accused me to the Monthly Meeting, I put into their hands a copy of that pamphlet, with a letter, recommending it to their notice, as containing "a correct and regular series of Extracts from the Yearly Meeting Epistles, from 1678, to 1810," which, I observed, would readily enable them "to compare those passages in the Epistle for 1810, with the general tenor of those Epistles, for former years, on the same subjects. This comparison," I added, "may assist you in determining, whether they are consistent with each other, and if they are not, which is most conformable to Scripture doctrine."

Whether the overseers, or the committee of the Monthly Meeting, ever perused this pamphlet, thus submitted to their notice, in my own defence against their accusations, I am ignorant. If they did, they never spoke to me concerning any part of its contents, till I requested, towards the close of the committee's last visit, to be informed, why they had so long passed it over in silence, anxious as they had been, in the mean time, to search after additional grounds of accusation. This they refused to explain.

They accused me with having aided in dispersing some Remarks, which call in question "the omnipotence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the propriety of applying to him in secret supplication, as professed by the Yearly Meeting, in its Epistle for 1810." I might have admitted these charges, and have adduced the testimony of the four evangelists, that Jesus Christ positively disclaimed all such titles, and ascribed all the powers he possessed, to the Father. But I thought it more friendly, to put my accusers upon reconsidering their un-

scriptural accusation, and therefore submitted to them the following queries, as metioned p. 93. Viz.

1st. Do you consider omnipotence, as a communicable attribute? Or, as an essential inseparable attribute of the most high God?

2ndly. When you speak of Jesus Christ, as "omnipotent," do you mean the man, Christ Jesus?

3rdly. When you describe Jesus Christ, as "the proper object of adoration and praise," do you mean "the man Christ Jesus?" And by the terms "adoration and praise," do you mean supreme religious worship? To these queries, given them in writing, Feb. 7th, last, the committee never gave me any reply, verbal, or written.

At a former conference, on Jan. 22nd last, the committee having charged me "with holding, that Jesus Christ is not omnipotent, nor the proper object of adoration and praise," I proposed to them the following queries, as related p. 71—72. Viz.

1st. Do you consider the Lord Jesus Christ, as now "glorified in the heavens, in soul and body," as being "a true and real man," or, that he is in reality, in this glorified state, the supreme God?

2ndly. If you say the former, on what grounds do you accuse me, with having imbibed "unscriptural opinions," with regard to the person, and character of Christ?

3rdly. If you say the latter, how can you defend the position on scriptural grounds?

To neither of these queries, could I obtain any definite answer, but the committee appeared evidently to lean towards the latter, and expressed general dissatisfaction, with my having presumptuously meddled with such subjects. On which I observed, I had only one more query to submit to them at present, which was this:

4thly. How can you reconcile such "position,"

with the last paragraph of the 13th § of the 5th and 6th Prop. of Barclay's Apology?

To which the committee have never given me any other answer, than a censure for holding these fundamental Christian tenets, and saying at a future conference, "they did not think themselves at liberty, to give me their sentiments upon them, and that they had nothing to do with Barclay's opinions on such subjects." At this conference, I also proposed to them the following queries, as stated p. 94.

1st. Whether it is not undeniably the doctrine of Barclay, and of the Scriptures, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as now glorified in the heavens, is in soul and body, a true, and real man, by whom God shall judge the world?

2ndly. Whether you deem it sound and scriptural, to ascribe omnipotence to any true and real man, however exalted and glorified?

3rdly. Whether any true and real man, can be, consistently with the doctrine of the Scriptures, represented, as "the proper object of supreme adoration, and praise?"

4thly. Whether the Scriptures do not uniformly ascribe omnipotence, to that great Being only, who is therein styled, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and represent him *alone*, as *the proper object* of supreme religious worship?

To these queries also, the committee refused to give me any reply whatever, thus, most uncandidly concealing their own sentiments, on the subjects of their charges against me, and unjustly withholding all explanation of the real import of their accusations. Yet nothing could be more easy, than for them to have answered those questions. Whether they acted with this caution, in consequence of the result of the explanation I obtained, respecting the sense in which they understood the Society held the

doctrine of the divinity of Christ, is not for me to determine. But, it seems, they were, as to this point, and the Society too, in their estimation, either as heretical as myself, or I was as orthodox as they. Such was the actual result of their explanation upon that subject, by which it appeared, that they did not ascribe divinity, to the man Christ Jesus, but to that divine power, which dwelt in him, and acted by him ; a doctrine which I had frequently maintained, and never called in question.

It may also surely be inferred, from their refusal to explain their own accusation, that they hesitate to avow omnipotence to be a communicable attribute, appertaining to the man Christ Jesus. Or, that he, the one Mediator between God and men, is the proper object of supreme religious worship. Their accusation expressly relates to the present glorified state of Jesus Christ, and charges me with holding, that he “ is not omnipotent,” but they refuse to say, whether they mean “ that same Jesus,” whom the Jews crucified, and whom God raised up, and made both Lord, and Christ. That is, the man Christ Jesus, whom God hath exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour.

Unreasonable as I still consider this conduct of the Monthly Meeting’s committee, I shall not hesitate to state to you, openly and explicitly, my sentiments on the subjects of the above queries. I say then, it does appear to me, to be undeniably the doctrine of Barclay, and of the Scriptures, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as now glorified in the heavens, is, in soul and body, a true and real man, by whom God shall judge the world. 2nd. I do not deem it sound and scriptural, to ascribe omnipotence to any true, or real man, however exalted, or glorified. 3rd. I do not believe any true, and real man, can be, consistently with the doctrine of the Scriptures, represented as “ the proper object of supreme adoration

and praise." 4th. I am fully persuaded in my own mind, that the Scriptures uniformly ascribe omnipotence, to that great Being only, who is therein styled the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and represent him alone, as the proper object of supreme religious worship.

It has been observed, that Barclay's ordinary language, instead of being vague, indefinite, and unformed, is "as simple, clear, and definite," as that "of any author," that his style "rather removed the veil, which many of the phrases of the earlier writers" among Friends, "had cast over the aspect of the truths which they held, that as he wrote his Apology in Latin and English, each text is to be considered as an original, and each an undeniable comment on the other, and may serve for the clearing up any ambiguity that may unintentionally be in the work." These observations of Joseph Gurney Bevan, on the comparative clearness of Barclay's style, I grant to be, generally speaking, just, and they are, I think, peculiarly applicable to the following passage, on account of the remarkable accuracy and precision, with which it is expressed. There is hardly a term in it, of any importance to the author's argument, susceptible of a double, or a dubious interpretation. The sense of the writer is obvious, on a first perusal, either in Latin or in English, and the only effect of a re-examination of either, is to confirm the first impression. The passage is verbatim as follows: "Now, as the soul of man dwells otherwise, and in a far more immediate manner, in the head, and in the heart, than in the hands or legs; and as the sap, virtue, and life of the vine, lodgeth far otherwise, in the stock and root, than in the branches; so God dwelleth otherwise in the man Jesus, than in us." *Sic etiam Deus habitat aliter in homine Jesu Christo, quam in nobis.*

"We also freely reject the heresy of Apollinarius,

who denied him to have any soul,—*qui negabat eum habuisse animam*,—but said, the body was only acted by the Godhead—*sed corpus solummodo divinitate actum*. As also the error of Eutyches, who made the manhood to be wholly swallowed up of the godhead—*qui naturam virilem à divinitate prorsus absorptam voluit*. Wherefore, as we believe he was a true, and real man; so we also believe, that he continues so to be glorified in the heavens, in soul, and body, by whom God shall judge the world, in the great and general day of judgment.” This assertion of an inexpressibly important scriptural doctrine, is very clear, but the Latin original is still more luminous, and definite. “*Nam sicuti credimus, sic illum adhuc remanere in cælis, cum in corpore, tum in animâ glorificatum, per quëm, Deus judicabit mundum in novissimo, et extremo die judicii.*”

It has been said, that this passage is inconsistent with some others in the Apology, but I think, without sufficient ground, and that the preceding part of this section, if attentively considered, will at once elucidate Barclay’s meaning, and tend to vindicate the consistency of his sentiments. Such parts of it as relate most expressly to the subject of our present enquiry, I shall extract, with as little irrelevant matter as possible.

1st. “By this seed, grace and word of God, and light, wherewith, we say, every one is enlightened—we understand not the proper essence, and nature of God, precisely taken; which is not divisible into parts and measures, as being a most pure, simple Being, void of all composition, or division, and therefore can neither be resisted, hurt, wounded, crucified, or slain, by all the efforts, and strength of men.”

2nd. “As we do not at all intend, by speaking of ‘Christ within,’ to equal ourselves to that holy man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the

He has left out a part of the passage in Barclay's Apology—perhaps accidentally.

Virgin Mary, in whom all the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily—*in quo habitabat, omnis plenitudo divinitatis corporaliter.*”

3rd. “So neither do we destroy the reality of his present existence, as some have falsely calumniated us.”

4th. “For though we affirm that Christ dwells in us, yet not immediately, but mediately as he is in that seed, which is in us; whereas he, to wit the eternal word, which was with God, and was God, dwelt immediately in that holy man—*cum ille, nimirum verbum æternum quod erat apud Deum, et ipse Deus erat, et immediate habitabat in sancto illo homine.* He then is as the head, and we as the members; he the vine, and we the branches.”

It is not to our present purpose, to enquire whether Barclay is equally intelligible, and definite, when he speaks in the same section of “a spiritual, heavenly, invisible principle, in which,” he says, “God, as Father, Son, and Spirit dwells,” or to account for it, if he is not, because he expressly tells us, he does not mean thereby, “the proper essence and nature of God.” Neither does he, it is plain, by what he calls the spiritual body of Christ, of which he treats so largely in his 13th Proposition. For he says, in the 2nd § “It is that heavenly seed, that divine, spiritual, celestial substance, of which we spake before in the 5th and 6th propositions.” That is, as not to be understood of “the proper essence and nature of God.” Nor “of that body, or temple of Jesus Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, and in which he walked, lived, and suffered, in the land of Judea.”

Towards the conclusion of this section, Barclay accordingly describes the spiritual body of Christ, not as God himself, precisely taken, but as the instrument or medium, “by and through which, He, that was in the beginning with God, and was, and

is God, did reveal himself to the sons of men in all ages, and whereby men in all ages, come to be made partakers of eternal life, and to have communion *with God, and Christ.*" These sentiments of the apologist, appear quite consistent with his professed belief, in the reality of the present existence of Jesus Christ, *as a true and real man*, but wholly inconsistent with the idea of his being either the supreme God, or the second person in the Trinity so called.

"The Quakers do not," says Thomas Clarkson, in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, Vol. II. p. 314, "often make use of the word 'Trinity.' This expression they can no where find in the sacred writings. This to them is a sufficient warrant for rejecting it. They consider it as a term of mere human invention, and of too late a date, to claim a place among the expressions of primitive Christianity. For they find it neither in Justin Martyr, nor in Irenæus, nor in Tertullian, nor in Origen, nor in the fathers of the three first centuries of the church."

After these and some other observations, Thomas Clarkson says, "their principal concern is with that only, which is clearly revealed, and which leads practically to holiness of life." This is, at least, as it should be. He adds, "Consistently with this judgment, we find but little said, respecting the Trinity, by the Quaker writers. It is remarkable, that Barclay, in the course of his *Apology*, takes no notice of this subject." It is so, upon any supposition. But it would be most remarkable, if it could be shewn, that he believed this tenet to be a Christian doctrine. For if he did, he must have deemed it a fundamental doctrine, and as such, could not surely have passed it over in total silence, in so copious, methodical, and argumentative a defence of the true Christian divinity. These inferences would, I think, have been just, in the absence of any other

evidence than the work itself. But we are furnished by himself with the real reason why so little is to be found in that elaborate work, "expressly and distinctly" on that abstruse subject.

A Trinitarian opponent had, it seems, represented the Apology as defectively stating that doctrine. What is Barclay's reply to this objection? It is admirably expressive and intelligible, yet in strict unison with the precept of our great Master, "cast not your pearls before swine, lest they—turn again and rend you," it is couched in such terms as were not likely to subject him to persecution, to which another mode of expression might have uselessly exposed him. "I writ," says he, meaning in his Apology, where he does not so much as notice the doctrine of the Trinity, "as expressly and distinctly of that, as is expressed in Scripture; which I hope J. B. will not say is defective in expressing this *article of faith*." Works, Vol. III. p. 379. How impressive is such an appeal! To which I would however annex a brief extract from his "Quakerism confirmed," in which he asserts, and that not without a sufficient warrant, "That the apostles used the words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when they baptized, *cannot be proved*; far less used they, the word *Trinity*, which was not invented [till] long after the apostle's days." Ibid. p. 139.

The same opponent having proposed the following question to Barclay, respecting his belief in the reality of the present existence of Christ, "Do you believe, that that body which was crucified at Jerusalem, rose again and is now in glory? Speak your mind here if you dare." To this Barclay replies, "For answer then I say, I do believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was crucified at Jerusalem, was again raised *by the power of God*; in which glorified body the Lord Jesus Christ dwelleth. And I dare him to shew, where, in my Apology, or

elsewhere, I ever said or wrote any thing to the contrary." Ibid. p. 388.

So that Barclay, in this passage, in effect, deliberately asserts the consistency of all he has ever said or written, with that doctrine in his Apology, which the Monthly Meeting's committee, supposing it to be mine, and not Barclay's, so loudly censured me for avowing. And in the same page, he shews how he may have occasionally applied the term God, not in the highest and most definite sense. He says, "And if I, or any other, have called the light within, *God*, it is no more upon this *hypothesis*, than *they do*, who say *the man Christ, is God*, and by reason of the personal union, ascribe sometimes the actions of the one nature, to the person denominated by the other." In this explanation, there are two circumstances deserving of notice. The first is, that when Barclay so applies the term *God*, it is not in any personal sense, but on that hypothesis which he deemed scriptural. Secondly, that those "who say the man Christ is God, which he plainly intimates he does not, affirm it "by reason of *the personal union*," which their hypothesis, *but not his*, supposes to subsist between two natures, so infinitely distant as the human, and divine.

How then can it be thought that Barclay held the doctrine of the Trinity, or that he ascribed omnipotence to the Lord Jesus Christ? I find no such doctrine in his writings; and if I did, as a Christian I should feel myself bound to examine its truth by the testimony of Scripture. If it appeared to me to accord therewith, I should receive it rather on that account, than because Barclay held it. For divine truth always carries its own evidence with it, and has no need of any other; it is, like all true faith, founded upon sufficient evidence; and the Christian religion, as laid down in the Scriptures, is not proposed to mankind on the mere footing of authority, without

conviction, but on such evidence as is calculated to produce a firm persuasion in the mind, of its truth and importance, to our present and future well-being. Yet are those writings much better entitled than any other to our reverence, as being of the highest authority, in all that relates to Christian faith and divine worship.

To whom then do these writings ascribe omnipotence? Let us impartially inquire. The Greek word *Παντοκράτωρ*, translated almighty, or omnipotent, “is used ten times in the New Testament. And it is *solely* applied to *God*, in those sacred writings, but *never* to Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost. This word is used by the LXX in the Old Testament *very often*, and *always* applied to *God*, about one hundred and twenty times, and plainly appears to be an appropriate character of *God*.

“St. Paul useth the word but once in all his Epistles, 2 Cor. vi. 18. where nobody can doubt to whom it is applied; unquestionably. St. Paul applied this character to God the Father, as St. John hath in the Revelations in the following manner.

“[Rev. i. 8. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, saith the LORD GOD; (so the Alexandrian copy) who is, and was, and is to come, the ALMIGHTY. Now it must be observed, as it is indeed most remarkable, that the appropriation to God alone, is confirmed by four distinct beings; viz. by God, who gave the *revelation*; by Christ, who received it: by the angel who delivered it: and by St. John, who wrote it. Now GOD, and Christ, and the angel, and St. John could not be mistaken. This is an invincible testimony.

“St. John in a vision, iv. 2. 3. 8. saw a throne *in heaven*, and one sitting *upon it*, whom he describes particularly, with his attendants, on seats, and four living creatures. And they cease not, day and night, saying Holy, Holy, Holy LORD GOD, the AL-

MIGHTY, (the first title there mentioned) who was and is, and is to come, (the second title) who sits on the throne, (the third title) who liveth for ever and ever, (the fourth and last title of the supreme God, there mentioned.) Now all these are the appropriate titles, (never of Jesus Christ) but of his God and Father alone.

“Rev. xi. 17. St. John represents the twenty-four elders falling on their faces, and worshipping God, and saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art and wast, and art to come. No doubt, these applied rightly the character, viz. the ALMIGHTY.

“St. John also represents those who got the victory over the beast, singing the song of *Moses*, and the song of the *Lamb*, and saying, Great and wonderful are thy works, O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, or the ALMIGHTY. xv. 3. Note.—Here the Lamb himself is by St. John represented as the *composer* or *singer* of a sacred hymn to God, the Almighty. Here again Christ is represented ascribing this character (the Almighty) to God alone.

“Rev. xvi. 7. St. John represents another angel, saying, Verily, O Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. The same divine title is repeated. v. 14.

“St. John, in chap. xix. v. 4. represents the twenty-four elders, and four living creatures, falling down and worshipping God, sitting upon a throne; and afterwards a great multitude, saying, Hallelujah, that is, praise ye Jehovah; for the Lord, the God Almighty reigneth; or, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And v. 7. it follows, Let us give *him* glory, for the marriage of the *Lamb* is come. Note. Whatever is to be understood as a benefit, or honour, by that marriage of the *Lamb*, the praise or glory of it, is here expressly required to be given to the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. Afterwards, St. John, describing

Christ in several particulars, from v. 10 to 15, expressly says, that he (that is Christ,) treadeth the wine-press of the wrath, &c. of God, the Almighty. By which words, the distinguishing title, or character, **THE ALMIGHTY**, is given to **GOD alone**, and *not to Christ*. And, 21, 22, the appropriation of this title, or character, is very express: for **GOD**, and the *Lamb*, being there both mentioned, St. John stiles the first, thus, the **LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**; and the second, Jesus Christ, the *Lamb* only."

The above judicious remarks on the scriptural application of the term omnipotent, or almighty, are taken, from Hopton Haynes's "Scripture Account of the Attributes and Worship of God, and of the Character and Offices of Jesus Christ." (a) They are perfectly accordant, with my ideas, from my youth upwards, of the genuine doctrines of the Society. Does not Barclay assert, that "the infinite and most wise God—is the foundation, root and spring of all operation?" And if so, can omnipotence be justly ascribed to any other? In whatever manner, and through whatever medium, "that infinite and incomprehensible fountain of life and motion, operateth in the creatures, by his own eter-

(a) This work was first published in 1750, after the decease of the author, who was an intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton's. In the preface, the editor says, he "was a gentleman of great worth, and considerable learning; a pious and good man, who was desirous of worshipping **GOD**, and forming his religious notions according to the instructions of divine wisdom. Accordingly, he spent a number of years, 'in examining the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, with the utmost desire, and most ardent prayer, that he might be rightly informed, in the truest sense, of the holy authors of those divine books.' " The result of this examination, he thus describes: "I think, I write, I speak upon this important article, viz. that *the GOD and FATHER of JESUS CHRIST*, is the *only true GOD*, with a clear understanding, and a clear conscience. I have no doubts, no scruples: no fear of offending **GOD**, or displeasing Christ; no secret misgivings that I am, or may be mistaken: but a full and entire persuasion, that this foundation is most certain and infallible." p. i.—iii.

nal word and power," still, to use the strong language of Barclay, this "infinite and most wise God" is, in, and of himself, "*the foundation, root and spring of all operation.*"

A Being truly infinite and almighty, might doubtless confer the power of forming such a world as this, out of chaos, and even the whole solar system, on another being, and enable him to accomplish the glorious structure. It implies no contradiction, and is therefore possible with God. But such a being would not therefore be omnipotent; it would only be the exercise of a delegated and limited, not of an underived and unlimited power. The power of such a being would not only be necessarily limited in extent, by the will of the infinitely greater Being who conferred it, but might be also in duration, as we are assured the kingdom of Christ will be, to which he was appointed by his Father. This kingdom he shall deliver up "to GOD, even THE FATHER, that put all things under him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL." Cor. xv. 24. 28.

In the year 1675 George Fox published a work, entitled a Testimony of what we [the Society of Friends] believe of Christ, before he was manifest in the flesh; and of his birth and preaching, *and what he saith he is himself*: as also of his sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension; both as he was God, and as he was man. And also the testimony of the apostles concerning him; with those names which God—has given unto him, and the holy men, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; which we faithfully own and believe. But *all such by-names*, which are not found in the Scriptures, we testify against," &c.

In this tract, after quoting the first chapters of Matthew and Luke pretty fully, and the first verses of John, he says, "And is this the prophet, like unto Moses, that God raised up, whom we do *hear* and *see*,

as *Stephen did*, and have seen the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, who was persecuted by the priests and professing Jews." On whatever grounds Fox asserted that himself and his brethren saw "*the Son of Man, as Stephen did*," it is plain he did not consider him as God himself, but as occupying a situation of distinguished honour "*on the right hand of God*." Towards the bottom of the same page, 417, of his *Doctrinals*, he says, "So the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom the Jews betrayed and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had judged him to be delivered, before whom Jesus made a good confession." Again, p. 425, "But ye are of him in Christ, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 30, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, which we witness, blessed be God for ever." And the apostle saith, 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, THE FATHER*, of whom are all things, and we in him; mark, *we in him*, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. "*This we witness*," adds Fox. "The apostle prayed," says he, p. 429, "that THE GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, THE FATHER OF GLORY, might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, through the knowledge of him, that the saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his right hand in heavenly places," &c.

In the next page, after quoting the text, Eph iv. which says, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *one God and Father of all*, who is above all and through all, and in you all," and the substance of several of the following verses, which describe

Christ as having "ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," he seems to have thought these last words of the apostle, with which he concludes the quotation, might be misunderstood, and he therefore adds the following pertinent exposition of their import. "Mark, *fill all things*, that is he, that gives gifts unto men for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." A little lower down, says he, "*Mark*, all ye that call yourselves gathered churches, see who is the head of them, and what spots and wrinkles are in them. But we cannot but give thanks *for all things to God, even the Father*, in the name of Jesus Christ, the holy head, who makes his church holy." How sound and scriptural is this?

In the following page, after quoting the principal part of those verses in the 2nd ch. of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, which describe the high exaltation of Christ, as the consequence of his humility, and obedience, even to the death of the cross, Fox adds, "And this we, the people of God called Quakers, do confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*. For it is God that worketh *in you and in us*---that ye may be blameless and pure, and *sons of God*, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked generation." In page 434, after quoting 1 Thess. iii. 11, "Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, guide our journey unto you," Fox observes, "So here it is seen who was, and is, the true Christian's guide." In the same page, after quoting 1 Tim. i. 17, thus, "*Now unto the King immortal, invisible, unto God only wise*, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen," he adds, "And Christ would have all men, (saith the apostle) to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. Mark, all men to be saved. 2 Tim. 4, &c. And therefore are prayers and intercessions, and giving of thanks, to be made for all

men, for kings, and all that are in authority, &c. For there is *one God*, and one Mediator betwixt God and men, which is the man Christ Jesus. Mark, *the man Christ Jesus*, is the Mediator betwixt God and man, Christ who is *the heavenly man*."

In page 442, continuing the same subject, Fox says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again: mark, hath begotten us again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance immortal, and undefiled, mark, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you all, God's true believers, which are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Here is the saints keeper, *the power of God*."

In page 446, Fox quotes the corrupted text 1 John v. 7, but he makes no such use of it, as it was intended to serve; but on the contrary, after giving the next verse as follows, "And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one," he adds, "For this is the witness of God, which he testifieth of his Son: which God's witness, is greater than the witness of men. And he that believeth in the Son of God, mark, hath the witness in himself. And this we believe, and witness, and he that doth not, hath made him a liar."

After giving this sound exposition of the real text, he expostulates thus with Trinitarians, in the next paragraph, "And ye professors, who have given new names to the Father, the Word, and Holy Ghost, as *Trinity*, and *three distinct Persons*, and say, the Scripture is your rule, for your doctrine, but there is *no such rule in the Scripture*." But this is the record, that God hath given

unto us eternal life, and this life is in *his Son*. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us a mind to know him which is true, and we are in him that is true, mark, that is, in *his Son Jesus Christ*, this same is very God, and eternal life." (a)

The subordination of Christ to the Father, is strongly marked by Fox, in the following passages, p. 448, "And he that overcometh, saith Christ,

(a) That my readers may justly appreciate Fox's idea of *the divinity of Christ*, I will refer them to the following passage. Viz. "So they," says he, the Papists, and Protestants, of whom he was speaking, "are not like to be converted to Christ, *to heal them*, when they stop their ears *to the divinity of Christ*, namely, *his light, the life in him*, which Christ commands them to believe in, and walk in; *and yet*, without the light, *the life in Christ*, [that is, without real piety, and holiness,] pretend to preach him in the flesh, and [by an ungodly life,] deny him *in his divinity*." I need not point out, how different this representation of the doctrine is, from that which is generally held. "Such persons," adds he, "are not like, *neither can they preach Christ truly*, as he was in his flesh, *nor him in his divinity*." In other words, without a blameless life and conversation, no man can be properly qualified to teach, and recommend to others, truly, and with suitable effect, the divine doctrines of Christ. In the language of Fox, these "are ministers of *the letter, and old authors, and not of the Spirit*." Doctrinals, p. 1085.

Another similar instance of the sense in which Fox understood the term divinity, when applied to Christ, may be seen in p. 507, of his Doctrinals, by reading the whole paragraph attentively.

Nor did Isaac Penington, who was a learned man, discover the doctrine of "*the sacred Trinity*," in the 1 John v. 7, whatever he thought of its authenticity. For he says, concerning the three that are therein said to "bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, that these three are distinct, as *three several Beings, or Persons*; this they," the Quakers, "*read not*; but in the same place, they read *that they are ONE*. But as for this title of *sacred Trinity*, they find it not in Scripture; and they look upon Scripture words, as fittest to express Scripture things by. And surely if a man means the same thing as the Scripture means, the same words will suffice to express it. Now whereas they call this *a fundamental*, we do not find it so called in Scripture. This is the great fundamental, *that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*." Vol. I. p. 265.

will I make a pillar in the temple of MY GOD, and he shall no more go out. Mark, no more go out, and I will write upon him the name of MY GOD, Rev. c. 3. And c. 4. See the holy cry. Holy, holy, holy LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, which was, which is, and which is to come. And thanks were given to him that sat upon the throne, which liveth for ever and ever, and they cast down their crowns before him. And so must all do, before they be crowned *with Jesus*, who is worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power, for ever and ever." Yet is this ascription of glory, honour, and power, perfectly compatible with the subordination of the Lamb Christ Jesus, to him who is described as sitting upon the throne, THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, and to the superiority of Christ, over all those who may by the ineffable goodness and mercy of GOD, be crowned "*with Jesus*," in that heavenly kingdom which shall never have an end.

"And John fell down to worship him, that shewed him these things; but, said he, see thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren, which have the testimony of Jesus, worship GOD." Yet is Jesus most fitly described in the same chapter of the Revelations, as having "on his thigh a name written, *the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. And this is Christ," adds Fox, in his next paragraph "BLESSED BE THE LORD FOR EVER." p. 454.

He observes p. 462, "Christ saith, Thou, (*to wit, the Father*) hast given him, (*to wit, the Son*) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to all them that thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they know thee TO BE THE ONLY VERY GOD, and Jesus Christ, *whom thou hast sent*." Again, "Holy Father (saith Christ,) keep them in thy name, even them whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one. Here is the love of

Christ to his people. I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world; (mark) as I am not of the world. For their sakes sanctifie I myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth, as thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world: and the glory that thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one. And these are Christ's own words," adds Fox, "I, (*to wit, Christ*) in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. John xvii. These are the learners of Christ, which we witness unto, and here is an union and a fellowship with the Son, and the Father, Christ in his people, and *God in Christ.*"

This testimony of George Fox's, concerning his belief of Christ, fills 48 pages in folio, in close print. To these he has annexed a supplement, in the last paragraph of which, he quotes Phil. iii. 20, as follows, "Moreover, the apostle saith, 'But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, even our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.''" From which he thus argues,—“So if the vile body be changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body, it is not the same, &c. But doth not Christ say, he is from above? The second man, is the Lord from heaven, and his body, is a GLORIOUS BODY, and *he* is the HEAVENLY, SPIRITUAL MAN. Therefore, all that profess Scriptures, and Christianity, let them *keep to scripture terms*, and to those names which GOD and *Christ*, and the holy men of God in Scripture have given to it, and him, which are sound words, not to be condemned.

“G. F.”

“*Worcester Prison,*
“*the 25th of the 11th Month, 1675.*”

“The author, having the ancient approved Bible printed in Queen Elizabeth’s reign,” the editors observe, “that most of the quotations being taken out of the same, differ in some expressions from our new translation, *but not in substance.*”

In a tract of Fox’s, entitled “*The Man Christ Jesus, the head of the church, and true mediator,*” he shews that the apostles had not, and that no other persons can have a right to lord it over God’s heritage ; to set up articles of faith, or objects of worship, but exhorts his readers to “give over making of faiths, and look unto Jesus, *the author and finisher of the true faith.* And give over making of religions,” says he, “and come to the religion which is pure and undefiled before God.” Ibid. p. 716.

Finally, he concludes in the following manner, after quoting 1 Tim. 2, 3, 4, 6. “Now it is clear, there is but one Mediator betwixt God, and men, *the man Christ Jesus*, who is head of his church ; and whosoever hath set up, or do set up, other mediators betwixt God, and man, *than the Man Christ Jesus*, are in the apostacy from the apostle’s doctrine, and follow their own doctrines, and not the apostolical doctrine. For he is the one mediator betwixt God, and *man*, the ONE, ETERNAL, LIVING GOD, CREATOR OF ALL, and *Christ Jesus*, by whom were all things, who gave himself a ransom for all men ; he is the alone one mediator betwixt God, and *man*, who is the only head of his church, and his church do testifie him so to be, that are come to Jesus their mediator ; who hath made their peace betwixt them, and God, and so hath received him ; who is come, and hath given them an understanding to know him, and they that have him, have everlasting life.” Ibid. p. 717.

“G. F.”

“*The 10th Month, 1678.*”

The next tract in this collection of Fox's Doctrinal Works, is "Concerning THE LIVING GOD of TRUTH, and *the world's God*, in whom there is no truth." The first is, according to George Fox, "The LORD GOD of heaven and earth, who is the Creator and Maker of all things therein, which created and made all things good ; so he is THE GREAT LORD OF ALL, both of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and therefore all things are to be subject to THE GREAT LORD, especially man and woman, whom he made in his own likeness and image.

"So he is called GOD ALMIGHTY over all his works, and the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, to oversee all his works, who is present every where, GOD THE FATHER, who is the nourisher and preserver of all creatures that he hath made, and takes care for all, who gives life, being and breath unto all, and made the earth to be inhabited,—who is *the God of the spirits of all flesh.*" Ibid. 719—720.

"So the LIVING, ETERNAL GOD is the Creator and Preserver," says he, p. 728, "a holy, pure, just and righteous God, everlasting, immortal, and eternal, who lives for ever, who is without time, and over time, and hath all times and seasons in his hands ; a perfect, and pure God, holy and glorious, full of riches, eternal. But the world's God, that is out of the truth, is a destroyer, and brings into poverty, and maketh all dark, like himself, that obey him, and so come under the power of death.

"But *the living, eternal*, OMNIPOTENT GOD, is the God of truth, who is light, and in him is no darkness at all ; a holy, eternal spirit, that fills heaven and earth ; and heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. He is to be worshipped and served, in his holy spirit and truth, that he pours out upon all flesh ; which truth, the world's God, (the devil) is out of, in whom there is no truth. But the seed being come," says Fox, towards the conclusion of this tract, "Christ, who is the Saviour

and the life, in these last days, of the new covenant of grace, light and life, God hath spoken unto us, the children of the new covenant, *by his Son.*" Fox adds intelligibly enough, although by a typographical error in punctuation, a careless reader might mistake his meaning, "*The immortal, eternal, and living God of truth*, who was the first speaker to Adam and Eve in paradise, who was the speaker by the prophets, to the fathers in the old covenant, who is the speaker unto his children of the new covenant, *by his Son*, who bruiseth the head of the prince of the air, and destroyeth the serpent, the world's God, and false speaker. So the *eternal God of truth*, who was the first speaker, he is the speaker again unto his people, *by his Son now*, in these latter days of the new covenant, and so will be to all eternity." (a) Fox concludes this tract with these words, "Blessed and praised be THE GOD OF TRUTH for ever, through Jesus Christ."

"G. F."

"*The 6th Month, 1679.*"

The last tract of Fox's, which I shall quote on this occasion, is an answer he published to a declaration of Sultan Mahomet, addressed to the Emperor of Germany. The principal reason why he noticed this state paper, will be apparent enough from the following extract; as also how important he deemed it, to promote just ideas concerning "*the true Christian's God.*" Viz. "Now, whereas, the Emperor of the Turks saith, that he is commander and guardian of *the Christian's crucified God.* Now in this he is mistaken; for the eternal, incomprehensible, invi-

(a) By a partial quotation of this passage, John Bevans, in his Reply to Verax, p. 71, has so grossly perverted the sense of it, as to represent Fox, as therein speaking of Christ, as "*the immortal, eternal, and living God of truth!*" What can be more disingenuous?

sible, everlasting God, whose divinity extends throughout the whole earth, who is GOD in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, to whom all nations are but as the drop of a bucket, *this is the true Christian's God*, whom they serve and worship, in his Spirit and truth, which the Jews did not crucifie, nor could they crucifie; and it is blasphemy for the Jews, or any to say, that they did crucify the *true Christian's* ETERNAL, INVISIBLE GOD; and great ignorance for any to say, that THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S GOD *was crucified*, or, that the ETERNAL, INCOMPREHENSIBLE, IMMORTAL GOD, *the Creator of all*, who is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and the breath of all mankind is in his power, so that poor mortals, or externals, should say, think, or imagine, that the eternal, invisible, everlasting, immortal, incomprehensible God, was, or can be, crucified, which they cannot comprehend, which is THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S GOD."

"But *Christ*, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, who took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; he suffered for us in the flesh. And so as Christ also, hath once suffered for sins in the flesh, he the just, for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, so God was not crucified, but Christ being put to death, or crucified in the flesh, but quickened again in the Spirit, and rose again, and sits at the right hand of God. This Peter, one of the apostles of Jesus, testifieth, and the true Christians now believe it, and though Christ was crucified through weakness, that is, through the flesh, yet he is alive, AND LIVETH BY THE POWER OF GOD." 2 Cor. 13. Ib. 1006.

Such were the scriptural sentiments of George Fox, concerning "*the true Christian's God*," whom they worship in spirit and in truth; and also concerning "his beloved Son, the appointed head of the church, and true Mediator, between GOD and

men, *the man Christ Jesus.*" From whence it is not difficult, I think, to determine, to whom alone he did, or could, consistently therewith, offer up supreme religious worship. Yet, when I have contemplated him, as the founder of the Society, in which my lot was cast, and especially his character as drawn by so competent a judge of it, as William Penn was, I have sometimes wished to know, in what terms he was wont to express himself, when he was engaged in public supplication. "In his testimony, or ministry," says Penn, "he had an extraordinary gift in opening the Scriptures. But above all, *he excelled in prayer.* The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behaviour, and the fewness, and fullness of his words, have *often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation.* The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt, or beheld, I must say, *was his in prayer.* And truly it was a testimony he knew, and lived nearer to the Lord than other men: for they that know him *most, will see most reason to approach him, with reverence and fear.*" Preface to Fox's Journal, p. 28.

X But although there is no record of a single prayer by George Fox extant, that I know of, there are near thirty public prayers, of fifteen of his contemporaries, all of them approved ministers in the Society, which were delivered in London, between Feb. 7th 1687, and Oct. 11th 1694; and these, having been taken in "short hand," were published soon after (some of them as early as 1693, others probably sooner) with more than fifty sermons by the same ministers.

These prayers, appear to me peculiarly valuable specimens of such sound language, as enlightened and eminently pious men, deeply imbued with the solemn substance of scriptural doctrine, respecting

the proper object of worship, would be likely to adopt, in proportion as they were individually emancipated, from the creeds, and commandments of fallible men. And as such, I have often thought their republication would form an instructive, impressive, and edifying work; and be at the present time, an honourable testimony to the practical soundness of our ancestors, in religious profession, *as to the true object of supreme adoration*. In the concluding paragraphs of more than twenty of these prayers, the Father is expressly addressed, as being "GOD OVER ALL," as well in relation *to his beloved Son*, as to all other beings whatever, and the general tenor of the whole, is perfectly consistent.

How far these records, of the actual devotional language, of many of the most distinguished ministers in the Society, afford conclusive evidence of the original faith of its leading members, in that age, let every one judge for himself, and what is much more important, compare it with the *testimony of Scripture*. For my own part, when I contemplate such eminently pious men, as engaged in public supplication, TO THE SUPREME MAJESTY OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, I cannot doubt their having expressed the genuine sentiments of their hearts, with regard *to the object of their worship*.

Most, if not all of them, were educated in professed Trinitarian churches, from which they had withdrawn themselves, and it appears to me almost impossible, they should have adopted, with so much unanimity, such reiterated and decisive assertions of the absolute unity and supremacy, of GOD THE FATHER, *as their prayers contain*, unless they had in reality renounced the doctrine of the Trinity, upon every hypothesis, which supposes *any distinction of persons in the Deity*. (a)

(a) That William Penn had renounced this doctrine in the "Sandy Foundation Shaken," cannot, I think, be justly denied by any one

Having proceeded so far, it appeared to me proper to pause a little, to give the Meeting the option of

who peruses that work. But to shew what his sentiments continued to be, thirty years afterwards, I will give an extract or two from his reply to the then bishop of Cork, who, it seems, had charged the Quakers "with *great shortness and imperfection* concerning" their "*belief of God*;" although that belief was expressed in scriptural terms. "But, with the Bishop's leave," says Penn, Vol. II. p. 892, "He that *believes in God*, believes in *all that is necessary to a supreme Being*. It is what he, and all Christians, take for granted, and allow, as often as they hear any one say, *he believes in God*. For not to believe him *omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent*, is not to believe him *to be God*. We have said *more*," adds Penn, "than *Moses* said to *Pharoah*. For besides that I *AM*, is no more than *HE IS*, we have added, that *he is* the rewarder of all men, according to their works. We gave the text as it is." Heb. ix. 6.

"The text does not," observes he, "enumerate and require the belief of all the divine attributes and properties that are in God, but the bare belief of *his being*, and what *he is* to mankind that fear him. And whatever the Bishop says, *this is enough for a man to come to God*, though not enough, it seems, to come to the Bishop in the quality of a believer. He must help the Holy Ghost to speak properly, or we, that speak after him, must be *deficient* in our expressions, if not in our belief."

The next objection urged upon the Quakers by the Bishop was, "for being defective in their confession of the *holy Trinity*," although they had expressed it in the terms of the corrupted text, 1 John, v. 7. with the emphatic addition of the word *really*, (and these three are *really ONE*) instead of the words, "and these three *are one*." "If this is not a sufficient text to prove the Trinity," adds Penn, "I know not where to find one, *in the Scripture*. It is *generally* believed, the apostle *John* gave this declaration to the *first Christians*, to prevent their being deluded by *Cerinthus*. How came the Bishop then to render it, but a *by-passage*, and otherwise intended by the Apostle than for an article of faith about the Trinity? Is there a plainer, or fuller, any where in the writings of the New Testament? Three, and yet *ONE* is the doctrine of the *Trinity*. And no other Apostle *has gone so far*, or been *so express*. Insomuch, that the text *has been doubted*, and rendered *apocryphal* by such as *do not believe in the common doctrine of the Trinity*," which it is abundantly evident from his works William Penn did not, "and *foisted in*," adds he, "*to serve the turn of Trinitarians*. So plain *has it been thought to their purpose*, even by the *anti-trinitarians*. How then," asks he, without saying that he thought it so plain to their purpose, but rather insinuating the contrary, "is the text defective with the Bishop?"

adjourning, if they inclined so to do, as, although I had been heard with much respectful attention, a number of Friends were going out of Meeting, while the latter part of what I laid before them was reading.

Many Friends now leaving the Meeting, I requested permission to withdraw also, for a short time, which I did. When I returned, some Friends urged an objection, in point of form, to my proceeding farther, on the ground, that adducing fresh matter which had not been submitted to the committee, was an extra judicial proceeding. In such a mode of hearing a case, an appellant might purposely withhold from a committee, the most material parts on which he considered the strength of his case to rest, for the express purpose of rendering the hearing before the committee nugatory and useless, and make out quite a new case to the Meeting. I replied, I am fully aware of the force of the objections which have been made, to such a procedure, as it would be to treat the Committee of Appeals with great disrespect. I could, however, appeal to them, whether I had so acted, or whether I had, in their judgment, failed to do such justice to my cause, as was in my power. It was obvious from their decision, that they considered my defence before them defective, but I was satisfied they would not impute to me, any intention of that kind, in the hope of dis-

“ But he [the Bishop] says, the Apostle writ it *upon occasion*. Doubtless he did so, [supposing he wrote it.] But what occasion, I pray, than that of the *holy Trinity* ?” asks Penn, to argue the point with the Bishop, on his own principles. “ He [the Bishop] adds, And it was to the Apostle’s purpose, touching the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But what purpose could the Apostle have, but that of declaring the *Trinity*, and yet *Unity* ? What other use does he make of it ? The Bishop,” continues Penn, “ must be very hard put to it, certainly, to shift off, and lessen our confession in this point, and rather than fail, render the text itself short ; which, with submission, I think is a bold attempt in one of his station, *if he believes the thirty-nine articles.*”

turbing their decision, in case that should be against me.

The fact is, I had prepared nothing to lay before the committee on my appeal, because I was satisfied, the best, and most candid mode in which I could lay before them, the grounds of my complaint, would be, by reading the minutes I had made, of the several conferences with me, including such other documents, as related to the case. In order to render it unnecessary to go into this long detail, I had prepared the address, of which they had heard more than half, in drawing up which, I naturally adduced such arguments in my favour, as then struck me as most proper, and consistently with the end I aimed at, I endeavoured also to vary them, as much as I well could, but they were all directed to establish the same conclusions, as those I had before ineffectually urged to the committee.

My address, I thought it was clearly understood, was only to be considered, as a written speech, in which I had endeavoured to condense the arguments, the committee had already heard, in another and more dilated form. It was matter of real concern to me, that I had not been able to compress its matter into a shorter compass. And I had even late last night reviewed it, with a wish to strike out any part that I felt easy to omit. The latter part of what I had read, was inserted after the rest was compiled, because I did not think it consistent with the real respect I felt, for the character of George Fox, to pass over in silence, the conclusive evidence, his writings in my judgment, afforded, upon that greatly important subject, on which I had adduced them. Suppose my address had been extempore, could any one say, a person so situated, ought to be bound down to use only the same arguments, and even the same arrangement of his reasoning, as he had used before a committee on his appeal?

Luke Howard admitted, that so far as I had proceeded, although the arguments in my address, were in some instances amplified, and in others condensed, they were in substance and tendency, such as I had laid before the committee, but with the advantage of a better arrangement. Joseph Gurney Bevan remarked, that the part they had already heard of my written address to the Meeting, would take *many hours to examine properly*, and that if the Meeting adjourned to the evening, as had been proposed, he believed he must, from weakness of body, leave the farther hearing of the case to others, who were stronger. For his own part, he thought the parties should produce only such documents, as had been laid before the committee.

William Binns remarked, that he supposed the intention of the Meeting, in allowing the parties to be heard, was, in order to do substantial justice between them, and he therefore hoped the appellant would be allowed to state his own case, in his own way, without any farther obstruction, either now, or at the proposed adjournment. Several other Friends expressed their approbation of this proposal. But one, or two Friends recommended me, before the Meeting met again, to look over that part of my written address, which I had not read, to see whether it might not be shortened, without injury to my cause. I engaged to examine it, with this view, which I did, without seeing the propriety of omitting more than my examination of it last evening, had suggested.

Before the Meeting rose, the following minute was subjoined to the committee's report. Viz.

"And the said Thomas Foster, the appellant, not being satisfied with the report, the case was opened in the Meeting.

"This Meeting adjourns to four o'clock this afternoon."

QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX.

Held by adjournment, 11th Month 16th, 1812.

Afternoon Sitting.

Being called upon to proceed with my defence, I informed the Meeting I had re-examined the remainder of my written address, without finding that I could, consistently with my sense of duty, omit laying before them any part of it.

The next subject I added, to which I have to call your serious attention, is an examination of no less than fourteen texts of Scripture, which the Monthly Meeting's committee recommended to my consideration. Respecting these, I had only informed them in general terms, [as stated in p. 167,] that I could not discover that even one of them was applicable or pertinent to the occasion on which they were adduced. They did not appear disposed to hear my reasons for thinking them totally irrelevant, but I trust you will attentively listen to those reasons, as they are for the most part founded on the plain, obvious import of the respective passages, considered in their natural connection with the context. I then read the remainder of my written address, as follows.

The Monthly Meeting's committee seem to have formed a very crude and unscriptural notion of omnipotence, by a paper which they put into my hands, containing a reference to no less than fourteen texts, to explain the grounds whereon they "impute omnipotence to Jesus Christ." The first of these, is Matt. ix. 6. That the full import of the context may be seen, I shall give it from the 2nd, to the 8th verse, which explicitly states a very different inference from the same fact, made by those

who were witnesses of the miracle, there related, and on account of whose faith it appears to have been in great measure wrought, to that which the committee would deduce from it.

“ And behold, they brought to him, (Jesus) a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, this man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, arise and walk?

“ But that ye may know, that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude,” whose faith Jesus appears to have approved, “ saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men.” It never occurred to them, to impute omnipotence to the meek and humble Jesus. They were Jews, believers in one, only true and living God, the original author of all power.

The idolatrous inhabitants of Lystra judged far otherwise, on witnessing the miraculous cure of a cripple, “ who had never walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, the gods are come down to us, in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands, and would have done sacrifice, with the people; which, when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach

*It is surprising that the Quarterly, meeting
larger could consent to hear so long
a tissue of sophistry as he brought forth
in order to undermine the other will*

unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities," that is, from worshipping those by whose agency a real miracle had been performed, "unto the living God," by whose aid it was wrought, "who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." Acts xiv. 8—15.

The next text, adduced by the committee for the same purpose, is Matt. xvi, 27. viz. "For the son of man, shall come *in the glory of his Father*, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." When it can be otherwise shewn, that omnipotence is a suitable characteristic of the son of man, who is to come in the glory of his Father, this text may be something to the purpose.

The third text, on which the committee profess to rely, is Matt. xxviii. 18. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Whatever may be the true sense of the terms "all power," in this passage, which it seems to me the two next verses sufficiently explain, it is clear even from this verse, that it has no reference to underived power, and therefore cannot import, actual omnipotence.

The fourth text, from whence the committee deduce the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, is John i. 10. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." How this implies omnipotence, I do not understand.

The fifth, is John iii. 31. "He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven, is above all." These sayings of John the Baptist, are undoubtedly just, as he applied them; but I see no reason whatever, to suppose he meant thereby to ascribe omnipotence to the Messiah. In the 34th and 35th verses, he is recorded as saying, "For he, whom God hath sent, [that is Jesus Christ] speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the spirit

by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." That is, all the power of the Son, however great, was derived from the Father, that is, from God. Yet is the 34th verse cited by the committee, to prove the omnipotence of Jesus Christ!

The seventh text they appeal to, is John v. 26. which most expressly asserts the life of the Father, the primary, and inexhaustible source of all life, to be inherent "*in himself*," and that of the Son to be, not underived, but the gift of God. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he, [being omnipotent and immortal,] given to the Son, to have life in himself." The next verse adds, "and hath given him authority to execute judgment, *because he is the Son of Man*." That is, the appointed Messiah, for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.

The eighth ground, on which the committee impute omnipotence to Jesus Christ, is a declaration he is recorded to have made, "I and my Father are one." The text, John x. 30. does not say, they are one being, one person; nor that they are co-equal, co-eternal, or co-omnipotent. Such self-contradictions, are not to be found in the sacred writings. The text simply says, they "are one," and the evangelist leaves his readers to judge for themselves, from the whole passage, in what sense those words are to be understood. That is, whether of unity of design, and co-operation, or of unity of person. The occasion on which those words were spoken, was as follows:

"And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, (that is the Messiah) tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Fa-

ther's name, they bear witness of me," that he sent me. "But ye believe not; because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." John x. 23—30. As if he had said, I am the appointed shepherd of the sheep, and my Father, whose power is omnipotent, will enable me to preserve all that he hath given me. For he is greater than all.

How blind, and prejudiced is a persecuting spirit, of which the conduct of the Jews on this occasion, affords a striking example. This unequivocal assertion, of the supremacy of the God whom they professed to worship, in his parental character, and by him, who spake as never man spake, neither abated their rage, nor prevented their perversion of the words of Jesus. "Then the Jews took up stones again, to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you *from my Father*; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said ye are Gods?"

x After this truly Socratic appeal to them, on their own law, which they professed to revere, he thus argues the injustice of their accusation with them, on their own principles, and in the following conclusive manner: "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken: say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If

I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." v. 31—38. These calumniating Jews, who were assembled at this time, at "the feast of the dedication" of the temple, could not well have been ignorant, whom Jesus called his Father, as it appears he informed those who were met in the temple, but a short time before, in the most explicit terms, "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say that he is your God." John viii. 54.

The ninth ground on which the committee impute omnipotence to Christ, is because he is recorded, John xiv. 9, to have said unto Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" The next verse, if maturely considered, will shew, I think, how entirely unfounded such a construction of the import of the text is. Jesus adds, "Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." The evangelist cannot possibly have understood those expressions, in any literal sense, for he assures us, that "no man hath seen God at any time." 1 John iv. 12. Yet it may be truly said, on the authority of Christ himself, that "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The tenth text on which the committee found their belief in the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, is Eph. i. 21, which is so expressly connected with several of the foregoing verses, that without referring to them, it is impossible to ascertain to whom it relates, or to form any correct judgment of its import. The apostle, after saying, v. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ :” says v. 15, “ Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling—and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places.” v. 15—20. Then follows the verse which the committee adduce, not to prove the omnipotence of the God and Father of Christ, which the whole import of the chapter, and of the epistle, goes to establish, in the clearest manner, but of Jesus Christ himself ! This verse describes, in very appropriate terms, I have no doubt, the dignity of being exalted at the right hand of God, but it does not say, that omnipotence appertains to the person, whom the Father hath thus exalted. Yet may it, as the text says, to which the committee appeal, be “ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Him only “ excepted, who did put all things under him.”

The next text which the committee adduce, as imputing omnipotence to Jesus Christ, is 1 Cor. i. 24. The true import of which, they seem to have mistaken, probably owing to the modern division of the text into verses, the sense of the part quoted, depending upon that of the preceding verse, which is, strictly speaking, part of the same sentence. But an attentive view of the context, more at large, will render the sense, and connexion of the apostle’s rea-

soning, more plain and perspicuous. In the 18th verse, he says, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us which are saved, *it is the power of God.*" The intermediate argument of the apostle, in the three next verses, is important, but not necessary to exhibit his meaning, as to the point in question. This will be sufficiently apparent, by the three following verses, when compared with the 18th.—Viz. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." To wit, the doctrine of Christ, and him crucified. The apostle concludes his argument thus, "But of him (God), are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." v. 30. Surely this is ultimately to ascribe all to God, and consequently not omnipotence, or underived, unlimited power, to Jesus Christ. The apostle first says, that "the preaching of the cross is to them—which are saved—the power of God," afterwards that preaching "Christ crucified," is "unto them which are called—Christ the power—and the wisdom of God:" lastly, that "Christ Jesus—is made—of God—unto such—wisdom," &c. as above. Or in other words, "Though he (Christ) were a son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him." Heb. v. 8, 9.

The twelfth ground on which the committee impute omnipotence to Jesus Christ, is, because he is said, Col. i. 15, to be "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature!" I cannot discover

that this text gives the least countenance to such doctrine, and the immediate context teaches the contrary. This verse itself, represents that God is "invisible," an essential characteristic of the one supreme; that Jesus Christ, was not God himself, the king eternal, immortal, the omnipotent, but the image of the invisible God, and that he was "the first born of every creature." That is, either the most excellent of the whole creation, or, as the 18th verse has it, "the first born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." As to his being in the image of God, surely that cannot be justly thought to import omnipotence, but rather that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled." Is it not said, that God created man in his own image? "In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." In the 3rd verse of this chapter, the apostle says, speaking for himself, and Timotheus, "We give thanks to *God and the Father*," &c. according to the received text, as if God were *one Being*, and the Father *another*; but there is no such ambiguity in the original, which as Joseph Gurney Bevan has very justly observed, in a note on this text, in his *Life of Paul*, is "*more literally*," as it stands in the "*Improved Version*," thus—"We give thanks *to the God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love to all the saints." Hence it most evidently appears, to have been the judgment of the apostle, that true faith in Christ Jesus, was strictly compatible with a belief, that the great Being, to whom he always prayed, and gave thanks, stood in the relation of God, that is of a superior to Christ Jesus, as well as to all other beings whatever.

A similar ambiguity occurs in the thirteenth text, to which the committee refer me, as imputing omni-

potence to Jesus Christ, viz. Col. ii. 2. as rendered in the authorized version. This however, though equally requiring it, Joseph Gurney Bevan has not pointed out to his readers. It is given thus: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Supposing this were the true reading, how it can be thought to impute omnipotence to Jesus Christ, I do not at all understand. The sense of the whole passage, including the 1st and 3rd verses, is in my apprehension more clear, and I have reason to believe "more literally" and correctly rendered by Archbishop Newcome. "For I would that ye knew what earnest care I have for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, they being knit together in love, and to all riches of the full assurance of their understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God *the Father, and of Christ*, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Whether Paul wrote the words *the Father and of Christ*, is uncertain. The manuscripts vary: Griesbach omits those words; Newcome retains them, but with his usual mark of doubtful authenticity. So far as the question at issue is concerned, it is of no consequence, whether those words were, or were not part of the original text. If they were not, all that the latter verse speaks of, refers to "the knowledge of the mystery of God." If they were, it refers to "the knowledge of the mystery of God *the Father, and of Christ*," that is of the Messiah, the Son and sent of the Father. The received version, by the simple exchange of the word *which* for *whom*, refers the whole that is spoken of in the 3rd verse, to Christ, as if he were omniscient, which he has

assured us in the plainest manner he was not, but the Father only. Matt. xxiv. 36.

The fourteenth and last text, which the committee adduced as imputing omnipotence to Jesus Christ, is Heb. i. 2. This verse, without question, speaks of Christ in terms of high, perhaps of the highest "*appointed*" dignity. But in order to form any correct judgment of its true import, the first verse should be looked at, with as much attention as the second. They are thus rendered in the received text, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son, *whom he hath appointed* heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." More literally, "*for whom also he constituted the ages.*" "The design of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews," says Hopton Haynes, "as most commentators agree, and indeed all must agree, who carefully peruse it, was to shew by several instances, the preference of Christ, and the Christian institution, to Moses and the high priest, and the Mosaic dispensation. For this purpose the author, in the first chapter, magnifies the character of *Jesus Christ*, as one, whom GOD, after all other messages to his people by his prophets, had at last resolved to send under the character of *his Son*, a more extraordinary messenger than those prophets; for GOD had made him *the spiritual heir of his inheritance, the church*; and GOD by him, (his prophet or messenger) new-formed the ages, that is, times, and not the material world, as it is commonly misunderstood." Scripture Account, &c. p. 312. 3rd edit.

The selection of fourteen such texts, to prove that Jesus Christ was omnipotent, I may be allowed to say, supposing the doctrine to be scriptural, implies that the committee hold it on false grounds. It implies also, that they do not understand by "omnipo-

tence," as the sacred writers did, underived, unlimited, infinite power; but such power, how great soever, as was capable of being given, and consequently of being received, by the person to whom it was imparted. On consulting the texts referred by them to my attention, I conceived they must have adopted such an unscriptural notion of omnipotence, and wishing to know from themselves whether my inference was just, I waved entering into any discussion respecting these texts at the next conference, but merely observed that till I knew in what sense they used the term omnipotence in that paper, I could not so well speak to their view of the subject; as to mine, I told them the whole fourteen texts appeared on examination entirely inapplicable. They refused giving me this explanation verbally, or in writing, by which you may form some judgment, of the real character of their endeavours to convince me of the errors, they supposed me to have imbibed.

The other branch of my offence, in aiding in the dispersion of the "Remarks on the Quakers' Yearly Epistle," relates to their "calling in question the propriety of applying to Christ in secret supplication, as *professed* by the Yearly Meeting in its Epistle for 1810." By referring to those Remarks, to the Epistle, and to the text quoted in the passage alluded to, it will appear, that in giving publicity to those Remarks, so far as they relate to this subject, I have only contributed to point out an erroneous quotation of Scripture, and the apparent consequence of such misquotation. This unintentional error of the compilers of this Epistle, as the writer of the Remarks considered it, the committee have most injudiciously held up as an article of faith, professed by the Yearly Meeting.

I was present when this Epistle was read in the Yearly Meeting. It was only read once, and that altogether, in an impressive manner I allow, but not

afterwards paragraph, by paragraph, making a pause between each, that inadvertent errors might be pointed out, and corrected, as had been the uniform practice till then, within my remembrance. On its being read, however, this misquotation of Scripture struck me; and when I most unexpectedly found it was not likely to be read again as usual, I observed, that as the Meeting appeared to have so concluded, contrary to its former practice, I hoped it would be clearly understood, to be within the province of the Friends appointed to correct the press, to rectify any erroneous quotation of Scripture which might be found in it. That on its being read, it struck me there was at least one error of that kind, and if so, every one must see the propriety of correcting it. Joseph Gurney Bevan replied, that it was a proper, and pertinent observation. It did expressly lie within the proper province of the Friends appointed to correct the press, to see that all quotations from Scripture were accurately made, and he thought it might be safely left to their care.

X The application of the term omnipotent to Christ in this epistle, was objected to at the same time by a Friend, whose orthodoxy I never heard called in question. He observed very justly, as I think, "that was going a great way," and I should certainly have seconded his objection, had I then thought the Epistle contained such a passage, and when I found it did, I regretted that I had not. An approved minister, also objected to an unscriptural application of a text quoted from Isaiah, in the first paragraph. Yet was no part of the Epistle amended, or read a second time.

Under these circumstances, being deeply impressed with the evil consequences of quoting Scripture incorrectly, or without duly attending to the context, can it justly be deemed, I ask, an offence against a Christian society, for me to have pointed out such

"In him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily?"

passages in this Epistle, as appeared to me equally at variance with the general tenor of former Epistles, and with Scripture doctrine? With my convictions of gospel truth, even if I were mistaken, for I claim not infallibility, it would have been a dereliction of my duty, as a Christian, to have kept them wholly to myself. I therefore, occasionally, spoke my mind freely, and openly, respecting those parts of this Epistle, which are noticed in the Remarks, as erroneous, and unscriptural. Of these, the selection of the one which holds up Christ, as the proper object of "secret supplication," instead of his Father, and our Father, his God, and our God, as affording ground for accusation, appears to me peculiarly futile, and ill-chosen. If this tenet, be sound and scriptural in itself, it can never be defensible, "as professed" in this Epistle, because it is therein founded upon an erroneous quotation of Scripture. It was probably an inadvertent error, arising out of the ambiguous use of the term "*Lord*," and an incorrect use of the possessive pronoun "*his*." For only change the words "His kingdom" for the words in the text quoted, "the kingdom of God," the whole passage will be strictly correct, sound and scriptural, as also consonant with the general tenor of the devotional language in all the foregoing Yearly Epistles. As it stands, it contains an untrue statement of a declaration of Christ, as given by two of the evangelists, Matt. vi. 33. Luke xii. 31. and without any warrant from the text, substitutes one person, for another, the Son, for God the Father. With what consistency, I wish you calmly to consider, can any real lover of scriptural truth, censure the detection, and exposure of such an error?

If this branch of their accusation be considered, independent of that baseless fabric on which the committee erected it, viz, a false quotation of Scripture, it will stand thus.—They accuse me of hold-

ing that our Lord Jesus Christ is not omnipotent, nor the proper object of adoration and praise. I inquire of them, whether they mean "the man Christ Jesus," and whether by the terms "adoration and praise," they mean supreme religious worship? They refuse to inform me, and therefore, for any thing that appears to the contrary, there may be upon these points, no real difference of sentiment between us. It is plain they hesitate to ascribe omnipotence to the man Christ Jesus, or to say they consider him as the proper object of supreme religious worship, or as being, in his present glorified state, the supreme God. So do I. And I moreover believe it to be my religious duty, openly to declare, that I hold it to be wholly unscriptural to ascribe omnipotence to the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," or to offer supreme worship, or prayer unto him, or to consider him as the supreme God.

When the sacred writers use the words, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ, or the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they appear to me generally, if not uniformly, to mean the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This is so obviously and evidently the case, that when any other application, of either of those appellatives is contended for as scriptural, the grounds for such an exception to a general rule, ought to be clearly and distinctly shewn. If the respondents, therefore, still think fit to support their accusation on this head, I submit to you, whether it is not incumbent on them to state, either that they mean such of those terms as they have adopted, to be understood in their usual acceptation, or to specify what they do mean by them, or to explain the grounds whereon they would justify using them in any other, than their standing, scriptural sense. It is not for me to conjecture, what the committee did mean by terms which they appear to use in some very uncom-

mon sense, and refuse explaining. But all the exceptions from the general rule, for ascertaining the import of those sacred terms are so few, and so little capable of lending any support to such an accusation, that I feel myself as standing upon impregnable scriptural ground, whatever exception they may plead. Do not impute this confidence in the plainness of Scripture doctrine, on a point of such transcendent importance, as that of the unity of God, to a wrong cause. It is the result, I may safely affirm, of much serious, and disinterested investigation. And if I am in error, the refusal of those who were appointed to examine into the soundness of my faith, and to report thereon, to explain the terms of their accusations, had no tendency to correct my opinions, but rather excited a suspicion that they were in doubt concerning their own.

The omnipotence of God the Father, and the indispensable obligation of addressing our prayers, and thanksgivings unto him, are so manifestly and forcibly inculcated in the sacred writings, that no question has ever arisen respecting either, among those, of whatever persuasion, who believed the New Testament to be a genuine, and authentic record. The same cannot be said, concerning the ascription of omnipotence to Christ, or representing him as a proper object of religious worship. Nothing like either can I find in the Scriptures, nor is there in that which is called the Apostles' Creed, unquestionably the most ancient of the three, recognized by the Church of England. It is most strictly Unitarian, and I have repeatedly heard it quoted by approved ministers in the Society, at public meetings, as a correct exposition of the fundamental articles of its faith, with a small exception, of little importance. But I never heard either of the others, so distinguished. In the Nicene creed, which was fabricated in the year 325, omnipotence is ascribed to the Father only, and Christ is

said to have been begotten of his Father, before all worlds, to be "God, of God, Light, of Light, very God, of very God," to be "begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made," &c. The opinion of this council therefore certainly was, that the divinity of Christ, was derived from the Father, and that he was not without *origin*, or God of himself, as the Father was. Not a word is there like the assertion of equality, or co-eternity in this creed. The first council which declared the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit were equal in power and glory, was that of Constantinople, in the year 381. And this new doctrine, they called confirming that of the Council of Nice, to which it was expressly opposed. Thus was this great corruption of the primitive Christian faith, the doctrine of the Trinity, gradually introduced, step by step, till at length that disgraceful monument of priestcraft and fraud, the Athanasian Creed, was imposed upon the Christian world. (a)

(a) In the "Athenian Mercury" of June 14, 1692, the Quakers are charged with denying *the Trinity*. In reply to this accusation, William Penn says, "You should in justice have added, of *persons*, with all the school-niceties and distinctions, that belong to that sort of explication of Scripture; for to that only it is, your first proof refers, viz. William Penn's Sandy Foundation, p. 12. For the Scripture, no where calls God, *the holy three* of Israel, but *holy ONE* of Israel. And if he had said, *imagined Trinity*, p. 16, as you cite, which he does not, *in the copy we have*, it ought not to be so heinous with you, since *three persons* are not to be found in the Bible. And if you will not allow that council to be *infallible*, that formed this article [of faith] above 300 years after Christ's ascension, *as to be sure you will not*, I hope it must be their *imagination of the text*, if not, [it must be] *a divine inspiration*." Works, Vol. II. p. 804.

Such were the sentiments of William Penn, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, 24 years after he was imprisoned in the Tower, for publishing the 'Sandy Foundation Shaken.' From this passage it appears, as if two editions of that work had then been published, in one of which the epithet *imagined*, was not prefixed to the term *Trinity* in p. 16; but he shews at this time, *in the maturity of his age*, that such a use of it, was defensible, and that so far from

From this period it appears to me that all profess-
ed believers in that doctrine, with those who hold
that Christ is omnipotent, and the proper object of
worship, are reducible to two classes only: viz. 1st.
Those who believe there is no proper divinity in
Christ, besides that of the Father.

2ndly. The class of tritheists, who maintain that
there are three equal, and co-eternal Gods.

To which of these classes then do my accusers be-
long? To the first unquestionably; for they have re-
peatedly urged it upon me, that the Society of Friends
hold the doctrine of the unity of God, in a more strict
sense than the Unitarians do; the latter making a
distinction between God, and Christ, which the for-
mer, they asserted, did not, but considered them as
one, and the same Being. Now if Christ be, as they
hold, God in the highest sense, and I acknowledge
and assert his (God's) omnipotence, and that he is
the proper object of supreme religious worship, they
ought to consider me, I think, as asserting the same
things, concerning Christ. On the other hand, if
Christ be not in reality God the Father, in any strict,
proper, personal sense, or "precisely taken," to use
Barclay's definite language, but only his well-belov-
ed Son, the promised Messiah, whom God hath made
both Lord, and Christ, should I not, by ascribing om-
nipotence to him, or by offering him supreme religi-
ous worship, fall into idolatry? Whatsoever is not of
faith, is sin.

The whole extent therefore of my supposed error, so
far as I understand it, is, that I deem it more sound and
scriptural, to use only such terms to designate the
one Supreme, as I find most frequently, clearly, and
definitely applied, by the sacred writers, to Jehovah,
or God the Father, than such as are usually, if not

having recanted, he still continued to approve the doctrines he had so
ably maintained in that work, as being founded on the testimony of
Scripture, and of right reason.

*Van Pelt's objection was to the unscriptural
and humanly contrived distinction
of separating the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.*

uniformly, applied by those writers to the man Christ Jesus. My accusers appear to think, so far as I have been able to comprehend their meaning, that such terms are equally fit to designate his God, and Father also, the omnipotent, and sole object of all true worship.

Now supposing their opinion were just, and mine erroneous—do I thereby set up any strange unscriptural object of worship? Is it to infringe “The first of all the commandments, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is one Lord.” Mark xii. 29. This will not be said. What then is my offence? Why, in an affair of such great practical importance, in the exercise of all mental, or vocal acts of worship, I think it most safe to abide by the general scriptural rule, which all Christians, in every age, have united in approving, in preference to an alleged exception, respecting the nature of which, they have always disagreed, and which appears to me, of more than doubtful authority.

9th. The last accusation in this report is, that your appellant “avows, that he is a member of the Unitarian Society, in which he confesses he has great satisfaction.” It will surely be allowed, that it is an incumbent duty on those who undertake to accuse a person, upon his own confession, to do it correctly. That is, neither to misstate any thing, nor to withhold any part of the confession, so as, thereby, to alter its true import. If accusers, who do either, are in possession of better evidence, and have been previously, and plainly apprised of the injustice of such artifices, their conduct is proportionably the more reprehensible. Such, I submit to you, was the conduct of the committee on this occasion. Connected as this charge is, with the rest of their report, it is scarcely possible for any one to read it, (who does not happen to be otherwise better informed,) without supposing, that I had become a

member of another distinct religious Society. And it is difficult to imagine, it was not intended to make this false impression upon the Meeting, for I had strongly and plainly represented to them, the injustice they would be doing me, if they did not, in the report they were directed to make, expressly specify, that the Society I was a member of, was merely a *Book Society*.

It is not a sufficient apology for such injustice, to say, it was in my power to explain this to the Meeting. For the whole record of the case, in conformity, I am sorry to say, (so far as I have had the means of judging,) to the usual practice, is a mere *ex parte* statement. It does not even appear, on the face of the record, that I made the least objection to any part of the report. Yet is this partial, imperfect, incorrect, and delusive report of my sentiments, and conduct, placed, without comment, upon the Meeting's books, to transmit the same to posterity.

The satisfaction which the committee say I expressed, they knew referred only to the perusal of such works as this Society had published, and I might not otherwise have known. Under such circumstances, I refer it to you, to consider, whether it were consistent with candour, justice, or impartiality, entirely to keep out of sight, that the Society I was connected with, was a mere *Book Society*, the subscribers to which, they knew were members of various religious societies. They did not pretend to have any knowledge of those works, with which I had become acquainted, so much to my satisfaction, in consequence of becoming a subscriber to this *Book Society*, and refused to be informed. Yet it is evident, they ought to have known something of the tenor and tendency of those works, before they could be justified, even upon any plausible intolerant principles, in representing the "satisfaction" I had expressed, as a crime.

In their conferences with me, they finally rested their objection, to my being a subscriber to this Book Society, as I observed in an early part of this address, on a sentiment in the preface to its Book of Rules, which sentiment, although they allowed it to be sanctioned by apostolic example, they fancied was disrespectful to the character of Christ! This objection, implies an equal censure on the sacred writer, as on the London Unitarian Book Society, and on me, as a subscriber thereto. The occasion for this injudicious censure, was this: in the said preface, "the man Christ Jesus," is represented as "the creature and messenger of God, and not his equal, nor his vicegerent, nor co-partner with him in divine honours, as some have strangely supposed." If this be disrespectful to the character of Christ, what shall we say of the language of the prophets concerning him? Did not Christ himself say, "I can of mine own self do nothing?" Can any words be more plain and definite? I leave you to judge, whether he thereby describes himself, as "the finite and impotent creature," to use the language of William Penn, or "*the infinite and omnipotent Creator?*"

On the above ground, did the committee rest their objection to my being a subscriber to this Book Society, but I persuade myself your superior judgment, will place the question as reason, and justice require, on the propriety, or impropriety of my according with its fundamental principles. With these, as Christian truths of great importance, I was well acquainted, long before I knew that such a Society existed. It may appear singular to you, but I was first acquainted with the existence and constitution of this Book Society, by a member of the Society of Friends, and one of the most highly respectable characters, for moral and religious worth, and for solid intellectual endowments, that I have ever

known. The person to whom I allude, was the late William Rathbone, of Liverpool, who had been a subscriber to this Book Society, and his name and residence was annually published in the list of its members, for twelve years previous to my becoming a subscriber, without his ever having been subjected to any ecclesiastical censure on that account. This excellent man honoured me with his personal friendship, and frequent correspondence, till the fatal progress of his last illness interrupted the delightful and instructive intercourse, as I found it, for he was truly an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile, and possessed, in a most eminent degree, those qualities of a vigorous, well regulated, and expanded mind, which are an ornament to human nature, and command the esteem and veneration, of all who are capable of justly appreciating, the value of such uncommon excellence. Such was the impression I had received, of the genuine character of the man, whose example I followed, in becoming a subscriber to this Book Society, instituted for the promotion of Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of Virtue. How then could I reasonably suppose such conduct could be deemed criminal?

William Rathbone, it is true, was not a Quaker, or a Christian, merely, or principally, because his parents, much as he revered them, were such. Religion was with him, as it ought to be with every man, a subject of interesting personal enquiry, and not a slavish and implicit adherence to the faith of his ancestors, as is lamentably the general case, in every church, which does not admit, and sedulously encourage, a spirit of free enquiry, and the exercise of the rights of private judgment. His integrity was unimpeachable, and indeed above suspicion. His actions were not governed by the impulses of a heated, or disordered imagination, but were the result of a cool

T t

*W. Rathbone was another disciple
of Hannah More.*

judgment, acting with great deliberation, and especially in all that concerned religion.

Such were the grounds on which he became a subscriber to this Book Society, and he had to a very late period of his life, and I have reason to believe as long as he was capable of contemplating it, increased satisfaction in the consequences of his connexion therewith. Nor did he, any more than myself, imagine it was at all inconsistent with retaining our membership in the Society of Friends. He was deeply impressed with the great importance of its fundamental principles, and considered them as the basis of all true religion, and the general character of its publications, as well calculated to promote the great cause of virtue and religion.

It remains for me to shew, that these fundamental principles, as laid down in the preface to its Book of Rules, are somewhat fuller, but otherwise almost the counterpart of those which are given in the Summary, as the "general belief," of the Society of Friends. They are these:

"The fundamental principles of this Society are, that there is but ONE GOD, the SOLE former, supporter, and governor of the Universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is one mediator between God, and men, the MAN Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life."

The "general belief" of the Society of Friends, as given in the Summary of their "history, doctrine, and discipline," which was "written at the desire," and "published by permission of the Meeting for Sufferings," is thus stated:

"We agree with other professors of the Christian name, in the belief of ONE ETERNAL GOD, *the Creator, and Preserver of the Universe*, and in Jesus

Christ *his Son*, the Messiah, and Mediator, of the new covenant.”

Such is the substantial agreement of this authenticated profession of the “general belief,” of the Society of Friends, with the fundamental principles of the London Unitarian Book Society, for being a subscriber to which, I have been disowned. The first strong impression I received, of the great importance of these doctrines, and of some others, naturally connected therewith, was from perusing in early life that sound and scriptural defence of them, Penn’s “Sandy Foundation Shaken.” The recent publication of this work, by the above-mentioned Book Society, is a sufficient proof, that it was considered by them, as “calculated to promote the general design of the Society,” viz. “the diffusion of Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue.” It was recommended agreeably to the rules, by three members, (of whom I was one) “as worthy of the patronage of the Society,” at one meeting, and unanimously ordered “to be printed, and received into their catalogue,” at the next, being the annual meeting.

This work was first published in 1668, “about which time,” says the author of Penn’s Life, prefixed to the first edition of his works, printed in 1726, “he first came forth in the work of the ministry, rightly called to, and qualified for that office; being sent of God, to teach others, what himself had learned of him,” with much more, equally expressive of the high sense the Society entertained of the soundness of his spiritual faculties, in the very year when he wrote this work, and suffered imprisonment for publishing this noble vindication of the unity, mercy, and purity of God. The next testimonial I shall adduce, of the continued approval of this work, by the Society of Friends, is from the preface to the folio edit. of Penn’s select works, printed so lately as the year 1771, by which it appears, that

“ the works of this eminent person, having long been out of print, and much inquired after—it was judged expedient, previously to another impression, to review the whole, and to select for publication *all* such parts of our author’s writings, as have an immediate tendency, to promote the cause of religion in general, containing doctrines, in which people of all nations, ranks, and conditions, are interested without dispute; and such likewise, as at the same time that they contribute to the same great end, the increase of primitive Christianity in life and doctrines, include an apology for the religious principles, and practices of the people, to whom he was united in profession. A few of his controversial pieces are retained, many are omitted; such especially, the causes of which being temporary, are thereby rendered less interesting to the present age.” The Sandy Foundation Shaken, is however retained, as being one of Penn’s “ many excellent treatises, of general and lasting use—of great importance to the cause of piety and virtue,”—as an able vindication “ of the principles of the Christian Society, of which he was an honourable member.”

I may be told, there is another work of Penn’s, written while he was suffering persecution for publishing this, which he called an Apology for it. And it has been represented as nearly allied to a recantation. There may be some difficulty in reconciling the two books together, upon such principles of biblical criticism, as are now generally approved, but I have, by far, too high an opinion of the religious integrity of Penn, to admit that he acted so unworthy a part. The apparent incongruity, between the two books, may, I think, be otherwise accounted for, and I see no reason to suppose, he thought them inconsistent with each other. If he did, it would be, in my apprehension, impossible to vindicate his sincerity. If they appear so to any

person, it is evident such person cannot approve both. Let every person then freely exercise his own judgment, and receive that as truth, which appears to him to be so, as being sound and scriptural. The Society has so long given its sanction to Penn's works generally, in the manner I have mentioned, that it cannot with any consistency or justice, censure and disown any of its members, for reading his works, or for comparing one part with another, and judging for themselves; nor for openly professing the result of such examination. Yet am I disowned, so far as I understand, for doing no more than this!

In the exercise of this Christian liberty, it is true, individuals may fall into involuntary errors. When this happens, those errors should be pointed out, and confuted. The spirit and precepts of the gospel, forbid the exercise of any other power in the correction of such errors than reason, and persuasion. To resort to other measures, to repress opinions which the rulers of any church may happen to disapprove, however limited their power, is to adopt the principle of persecution. It is at least, to substitute authority for conviction. William Penn, I believe, somewhere said he abhorred both. And so do I, as inimical to the best interests of man, and the progress of genuine evangelical truth.

10th. The committee allege, lastly, that "they endeavoured to convince me of the impropriety of my conduct, as a member of the Society, but that I was not disposed to allow I had acted at all improperly or inconsistently." They should have added, with regard to the subjects they were appointed to inquire into; for I was not indisposed to allow, that I might, in many other things, have acted both improperly and inconsistently. It was said by an apostle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" and a most wholesome ad-

monition it is, against all such Pharisaic pretensions. As to the endeavours of the committee to convince me of the impropriety of my conduct, I can say but little, because such endeavours, as they used, were directed rather towards the opinions they supposed I held, than to any improper conduct they alleged I had fallen into. By far the most prominent feature of their labours with me, is strongly marked in their report, "We questioned him," &c. These efforts were indeed zealous and persevering. I occasionally relaxed in my opposition to them, but in general, as they say, "decidedly refused to answer." The other efforts they made are not so distinctly marked in their report. They were, however, principally directed, not to convince me that the opinions I had imbibed were erroneous, for such or such reasons; this they scarcely attempted. But they exhorted me to keep them to myself, because they hurt many weak minds, and were generally disapproved, not only by Friends, but also by persons of other persuasions. They also attempted to impress me, but without effect, with the opinion they professed to entertain, that supposing there were errors in a Yearly Meeting Epistle, it was both useless, and inconsistent, to point them out. But, above all, the five papers they put into my hands, exhibit to any competent judge, in the most correct manner, the character of their labours with me, and their qualifications for such an undertaking. (*a*)

On the presentation of the committee's report to the Monthly Meeting, held 2nd month, 20th, 1812, the first effort that was made, before its being read, was to exclude me, in order that the Meeting might, conformably to what was stated as its usual practice, which custom had established, come to a conclusion thereon, before I was allowed any opportunity of being heard in my own defence. To claim this right

(*a*) For copies of these papers see p. 92, 93, and 154, 155.

in this stage of the proceedings, was said to be unprecedented. And the propriety of such procedure was insisted on, but although two of the committee, admitted, at the foregoing Meeting, that they had searched the Book of Extracts in vain, for a minute that would authorize them, by exclusion during the discussion of my own case, to deprive me of this most obvious of all rights, to a person accused. And therefore I was allowed to be present, to hear the report of the committee read, not willingly on the part of the most active members of the Meeting, but because they did not think themselves warranted in requiring me to withdraw, as no minute could be found, to sanction so gross a departure, from the plainest principles of impartiality and justice.

At this Meeting, I objected to the general injustice of the committee's report, and claimed the right of being heard thereon, if the Meeting agreed to receive it, after a copy had been delivered to me by their order. On this occasion I was permitted, after much opposition, to read a written address to the Meeting, relative to the two visits the overseers had paid me, and to their accusation, with the Meeting's indefinite minute thereon, as also to the two first visits I received from the Monthly Meeting's committee. But the Meeting refused to hear either of my letters to the overseers: and under these circumstances, on my voluntarily withdrawing, after expressly claiming the right of a farther hearing, on the two last visits I had received from the committee, and on their report, did the Meeting come to a precipitate conclusion, "to testify its disunity with such principles and conduct," as the said committee had imputed to me in their report, and to desire them to draw up a testimony of denial, and to bring the same to the next meeting.

A few days after, the clerk delivered to me a copy of the committee's report, and of the minute made

thereon. The next Meeting was held 3rd month, 19th, which I accordingly attended, and was then suffered to read another written address, without any opposition, or one word of comment thereon, while I was present. The Meeting had concluded a month before, what was to be done, and having so concluded, heard my defence with the appearance, at least, of comparative patience, and without any interruption. The plan was previously settled, and most, if not all the active members that were present, appeared to think that was the only proper time for a person to be heard in his own defence. The ill-success of any defence, addressed to persons who had imbibed such crude notions of equity and justice, cannot be matter of surprise, however unfounded the charges, however irregular the proceedings, however futile or contradictory the evidence. I remain still ignorant what rule of the Society I am supposed to have transgressed. When I inquired of the committee, they said the Meeting must judge of that; when I inquired of the Meeting, I was referred to the committee. My accusers were now seated as my judges, an office they had previously manifested an inclination to exercise in the absence of the party accused; but their search for a minute that would serve to sanction such a flagrant violation of justice, being unsuccessful, they were only partially gratified in this respect. Of their motives for acting thus, I wish to form no judgment; but of the natural tendency of acting upon such principles, I cannot entertain any doubt. No minute of the kind they were in search of, disgraces the Society's legislative code. The Meeting, however, or rather those who assumed the right of deciding for it, that is, probably, a few for the whole, acted upon the principle of such a rule, as far as was easily practicable; and that, in direct opposition to those equitable maxims, which ought to govern all judicial proceedings; viz.

to hear both parties in the first place fairly, fully and impartially, and then to decide between them as justice requires.

When I had gone through the irksome task of pleading in my defence, after judgment had been pronounced, and recorded, as I perceived in my accusers and judges a reluctance to reading the testimony the committee had been directed to draw up at the last Meeting, before I withdrew, I observed that I had no wish to have it read, before I left the Meeting, provided it contained no new accusation, which I mentioned having known instances of that kind, whereby great injustice had been done to persons disowned. If that was the case in this instance, I should now claim the right of hearing it read. Richard Bowman, one of the persons who drew it up, replied, "It does not contain any fresh accusation!"

On this assurance being given me, I rose and immediately withdrew. The Meeting sat about an hour longer; when it broke up, I was shewn the testimony, ordered to be issued, by the persons who drew it up. On perusing it, much to my surprise, after all, I found that it did contain a new accusation, and one that was unsupported by the evidence it appealed to, and destitute of any other. I therefore warmly remonstrated with them thereon. They refused to inquire into this, as did two of them the next morning, when they delivered to me a copy of this injurious document.

Continuing to feel the injustice and the bad example of such an abuse of the discipline, in proportion to the high sense I entertain of its advantages, when wisely administered and strictly confined to its proper objects, I addressed a letter to the next Monthly Meeting, claiming the right of being heard, in reply to these fresh charges against me. This request the Meeting refused to comply with, and I therefore refer

you to the statement I would have laid before them concerning it. See p. 181.

In due time, I gave notice of appeal, and it is now become your province to decide, on a mature and impartial consideration of the whole case, whether, in the exercise of the rights of private judgment, I have so far exceeded those boundaries which the Society has laid down, for the government of its members, as thereby justly to have merited disownment, and, if so, by what rule of the Society. Also whether the proceedings against me have been regular, and orderly, according to the immutable principles of gospel order.

X That the discipline has not been always judiciously administered, or upon proper principles, will, I think, be readily admitted by any dispassionate and intelligent person, who has been at the pains to look into the written records of the Society, those faithful pictures of the objects of its attention, at different periods of its history, and of its manner of treating them. To judge of these merely by the rules, journals of ministering Friends, or other printed works, is to form an opinion, as it were, by the aspect of the Sunday clothes of the Society, such as were thought most proper and becoming, in the eye of the public. The records, on the other hand, exhibit the Society in its genuine, every day character, in its working dress, employed in managing the affairs of its own family. Some knowledge of these also is necessary to enable any person to form a just judgment of the collective character of the Society at any period, and whether it has on the whole progressively improved, or not. I am of opinion it has improved in various important respects, but I cannot say it has, in an increasing disposition to tolerate and encourage the free exercise of the rights of private judgment on matters of faith and worship. These were highly respected by the early Friends, of which the Christian-like

candour, liberality and forbearance of the Yearly Meeting of London in 1694 and 1695, towards George Keith, affords a most striking and instructive instance. It was he, not they, that called for the suppression of works he could not confute. It was he, who was for setting up a creed, consisting of numerous articles of faith, expressed in unscriptural terms, with which they refused to comply.

They appear to have been willing to grant him the liberty of professing his own religious sentiments, but they very properly refused to silence or censure his opponent, or to adopt his own formulary of faith, as he urged them to do. He was therefore finally disowned, not on account of the speculative errors he might have professed, but for manifesting a boisterous, uncharitable and intolerant disposition of mind.

If there be, as I suppose, no specific rule of the Society, which authorizes disownment for such causes as have been alleged against me, the case should not be judged of by the prepossessions and influence of a few active disciplinarians, whose zeal may not be according to knowledge, however upright their intentions; but by a fair, candid appeal to those great principles of religious association, which are laid down in the New Testament, as the corner-stones of the fair fabric of a true Christian church. These should be ever kept in view by Christian societies, whatever rights other bodies of men may reasonably exercise in the admission and rejection of their members, they ought to act only on Christian principles with regard to either. The principle, upon which it is fit to receive persons into Christian fellowship, may be said to have little to do with the present case; but I take them, with submission, to be closely connected. What then of the Christian dispensation is so peculiar and important, as to challenge of right the name of creed and faith? Let William Penn answer. He replied to that question, "I say then,

that the belief of Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah, the Son and Christ of God, come and sent from God, to restore and save mankind, is the first, and was then (in the primitive Christian church) the only requisite article of faith; and this may be proved both by example and doctrine." After adducing several scriptural proofs of this, Penn adds, "Nor was this only in the days of Christ the effect of his gracious dispensation or peculiar indulgence, for after times afford us the like instances. This was the main bent of Peter's sermon; and when the three thousand believed that he whom the Jews had crucified, was both Lord and Christ, and repented of their sins, and gladly received his word, they are said to have been in a state of salvation. Thus Cornelius, and his household and kindred, so soon as Peter declared Jesus to be the Messiah, and that they had believed,—were received into the Christian communion." "Again," says William Penn, "Paul, as his manner was (at Thessalonica) went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures; opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, (said he) whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed. Thus we may plainly see," adds William Penn, "that they were baptized into the faith of Jesus, and not into numerous opinions; and that this one confession, from true faith in the heart, was the ground and principle of their church fellowship." Vol. I. p. 754—755.

The "sincere confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, contented Christ and his apostles," observes William Penn; "but it will not satisfy those who yet pretend to believe them. It was enough then for a miracle and salvation too, but it goes for little or nothing now. A man may sincerely believe this, and be stigmatized for a schismatic, an

heretic, an excommunicate; but I may say, as Christ did to the Jews, in another case, from the beginning it was not so. The question is not whether all the truths contained in Scripture are to be believed, but whether those truths are equally important? And whether the belief with the heart, and confession with the mouth, that Jesus is the Christ, and Son of God, be not as sufficient now to entitle a man to communion here, and salvation hereafter, as in those times? Against which nothing can be of weight objected. If it be said that this contradicts the judgment and practice of many great and good men, I answer I cannot help that. If they have been tempted out of their own curiosity, or the corruption of times, to depart from the ancient paths and footsteps of purest antiquity and best examples, let their pretences have been what they will, it was presumption, and it was just with God that error and confusion should be the consequence of such adventures, nor has it ever failed to follow them."

After recommending to your attention, these truly evangelical sentiments of so distinguished an author, and eminent a minister, in the Society, I have only to submit to your consideration, the two alternatives of confirming, or of reversing, the judgment of the Monthly Meeting. In the latter case, it would be to determine, either that some part of the proceedings had not been regular and orderly, or, that such errors as you had judged I had fallen into, in the exercise of the Christian right of private judgment, did not merit disownment; or, were such offences as the existing rules have not specifically subjected to such censure and punishment. It would not be to hold out your sanction to any "opinions" you may disapprove, and which I may believe to be scriptural, and accordant to the genuine doctrines of the Society, but to leave those "opinions," to their own proper evidence, and to the judgment of every man,

who thinks fit to examine how far they are supported by reason and revelation.

In the former, your responsibility will be much more extensive and weighty. To confirm such a decision, is, in the first place, to pronounce, that the proceedings on which it is founded, have been conformable to gospel order, and the rules of the Society.

2ndly. That Monthly Meetings are at liberty to set up, each at its own discretion, articles of faith, expressed in unscriptural terms. To exercise inquisitorial powers over their members, concerning them, and to enforce their reception, upon pain of disownment, without the sanction of any rule of the Society.

3rdly. It would be in effect to declare, that such accusations may be presented, and recorded, in indefinite terms, to the manifest encouragement of tale-bearing and detraction; and that their ostensible authors are, contrary to a positive rule, under no obligation to make known their informants, nor to explain their accusations, however vaguely or obscurely expressed, nor to inform the persons they accuse, whether they themselves believe those doctrines, they are censuring their brethren for not holding.

4thly. It would also be, like the church of Rome in former times, to set up a claim to infallibility, by declaring, in effect, that the Yearly Meeting Epistles, were too sacred to be criticised or examined—that it was useless and pernicious, to point out even such inadvertent errors, as may be found in them, and might justly incur the penalty of disownment.

5thly. It would be equivalent to declaring, that, in your judgment, no member of the Society, ecclesiastical officers excepted, ought, in future, openly to profess, or aid “in propagating,” such “opinions,” as he may believe were held by the most

approved authors in the Society, from a careful perusal of their works, but must, if he would avoid the danger of disownment, suppress his own convictions of truth, and enquire of the overseers of the Meeting he happens to be a member of, what he may profess without giving offence, and what he must keep to himself—how he is to understand the authors he peruses—what works he may purchase, and in what manner—whether he may disperse, or give away such works as he judges, may be useful in the promotion of piety and virtue—or, whether he may, by the serious use of that understanding given him of God, deduce for himself, in the best manner he can, the sense of particular texts of Scripture, or whether he is bound to receive their construction of difficult texts, contrary to his own conscience, and judgment?

Lastly, it would be to decide that, according to your judgment, a belief of all that Christ is recorded in the Scriptures to have taught, concerning himself, and his doctrines, is not a sufficient profession of Christian faith, to entitle a person to a continuance of membership in the Society of Friends, although it has never thought fit to establish a creed.

Sincerely desiring your decision may be promotive of the cause of pure primitive Christian truth, and its inseparable attendants, the rights of conscience; with best wishes for the real prosperity of the Society, and the universal diffusion of its genuine principles, which breathe “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men,” I remain your affectionate friend,

THOMAS FOSTER.

Bromley, Nov. 15th, 1812.

The respondents being called upon to reply, John Harris rose on their behalf, and observed, that they

had to present to the Meeting, very little more than such documents as they had laid before the committee, with the exception of *some errors in them*, which having been pointed out, *they had corrected*. That these documents were not arranged in so methodical a manner, as the statement, the appellant had laid before the Meeting, which might make what they had to offer, appear *not so pertinent*, from the different order and manner, in which he had treated the subject, to that in which it had been discussed, before the committee. After saying they had used their best endeavours to convince me, of the inconsistency of my opinions and conduct, with my being a member of the Society of Friends, he read the "brief statement" of their labours, noticed in p. 147.

He also observed, that the appellant having been charged with denying the "eternal divinity of Christ," he had requested the Friends, appointed to visit him, to explain, in what sense they understood those words? But he informed the Meeting, they judged it to be improper, to enter into any explanation, on such subjects; whether they had judged rightly, the Meeting would decide. They believed (he added) with the apostle, that "great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh," &c. (a)

(a) That is, my accusers call upon the Meeting to decide, whether they acted rightly, in refusing to explain their own accusations, and in concealing their own sentiments "on such subjects?" Yet no sooner had they referred those questions to the Meeting, than they proceed, as if conscious of the inconsistency of such conduct, to make a gratuitous confession of their own belief, in their own way.

The predilection of my accusers, for corrupted passages of Scripture, has been throughout most remarkable. They seem to be the main pillars of their own faith, and they recommended me to build mine, upon the same unsound foundation. They began with one in Isaiah, as mentioned in p. 5, and they conclude with professing their belief in the received version of 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Whereas all the churches," as Sir Isaac Newton has most conclusively shewn, "for the first four or five hundred years, and the authors of all the

He then read the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle, for 1810, but gave no farther explanation, than the Monthly Meeting's minutes contained, of the parts they considered objectionable. Richard Bowman proposed reading a passage in the preface to the Rules of the London Unitarian Book Society, when I requested, that the whole might be read, which it was, accordingly.

The respondents next produced a copy of the Improved Version of the New Testament, observing, it was the first work in the catalogue of the books circulated by the London Unitarian Book Society, and that I had owned to them, that I much approved that work. On this assertion, I appealed to the Meeting, whether it were competent to the respondents, to adduce a fresh accusation against me, on a subject which they knew had never been mentioned to me, till the last visit they paid me, as the Monthly Meeting's committee. I had never expressed any unqualified approbation of that work, much less to them. After the unequivocal disposition they had shewn, to search out matters of fresh accusation against me, I must have been totally destitute of all prudence and discretion, to have expressed myself, as they had stated. I had, on the other hand, expressly confined what I said to them, in favour of this Version, as rendering many passages, which had nothing to do with matters of controversy, more correctly and intelligibly, than the authorised version; for which reason, I frequently had it read in

ancient versions, Jerome, as well as the rest, read 'Great is the mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh.'" See his "Historical Account of two notable corruptions of Scripture, first published entire," in the late Bishop Horsley's quarto edition of his works, "from the *M.S.* in Sir Isaac Newton's hand-writing, in the possession of Dr. Ekins, dean of Carlisle." Vol. V. p. 531, &c. Or the same valuable tract since published in the Recorder, by William Mathews, Vol. II. p. 230, &c.

my family, and other versions also. Two of the respondents, Samuel Marsh, and Richard Bowman, insisted on my having expressed to them, nearly full approbation of the work. After one or two Friends had censured me for interrupting the respondents, they proceeded to read a part of the first verses of the gospel, according to John, with some of the notes which they had read to the committee, for which see p. 190, 191.

In the next place, they alleged, that the narratives of the miraculous conception, in Matthew and Luke, were printed in italics, thereby throwing suspicion on the truth of those parts of the New Testament.

One or two Friends observed, they thought this work, viz. "The Improved Version," was very improperly introduced, not having any thing to do with the original charges against me. Richard Bowman observed, I had laid much stress on the number of Friends who had incited them to commence these proceedings, and he represented, that only one or two overseers, of other Meetings, had at all interfered in such a manner. But Henry Knight acknowledged, that he had heard my conduct reprobated, in various large companies, for aiding in the distribution of the Remarks on the Yearly Meeting Epistle.

The respondents also alleged, that they did not think it would answer any good purpose, to delay the matter longer, as *from the first* the committee of the Monthly Meeting, did not think it at all likely, they should be able to bring about any change of sentiment, in Thomas Foster. As to the complaints I had made, of their questioning me, upon points of doctrine, it was not done to ensnare me, as I represented, *but only to find out what my sentiments really were*, and whether *they were accordant, or not, with the doctrines of the Society?*

After this, they thought fit to clear themselves

from an imputation, I had never cast upon them, by saying, they "had never called in question, the manhood of Christ."

Before Richard Bowman sat down, he told the Meeting, the reason why I had not heard those passages, from the writings of Verax, which they charged me with having written, was because I refused to enter into any discussion with them thereon; as I did also, [*he said,*] with regard to what I called, a fresh charge in the testimony of denial, which was repeatedly brought forward by the Monthly Meeting's committee, but that I refused to hold any conference with them concerning it.

They then read a part of the same Extracts, they had read to the committee, from the works of Fox, Barclay, Penn, and Penington, Sewel's History, and the Summary of the History, Doctrine, and Discipline of Friends, which are noticed p. 157—162, and 243—252.

But they did not attempt to shew the application of a single passage, or to explain how any of them bore upon the questions at issue. To conclude, they read the two following passages from Verax's Reply to Vindex, p. 29, inserted p. 195, and from p. 79, inserted p. 198. They also adduced one from Verax's Christian Unitarianism Vindicated, p. 87, which is given in italics, p. 203, and [*they said*] introduces a quotation from Dr. Priestley! The reader will see the whole passage, as quoted by Verax, p. 201—203.

The respondents having concluded their reply, I observed, that there were some matters of fact, which the respondents had so strangely misrepresented, that I must, in justice to myself, claim the privilege of correcting them. One of these directly impeached my veracity. The respondents denied, that there was any fresh charge against me, in the testimony of disownment. The Meeting knew I had asserted there

was. What was the matter of fact, and the best possible evidence in the case? In the testimony, it is positively asserted, that a certain express avowal, appears in the report of the committee to the Monthly Meeting. Whereas, on the most minute examination, no such avowal can be found. This incontrovertible fact, was stated by me, in a written document, read to the committee on my appeal, in the presence of the respondents. Of this document they had the possession for several days, and at the next sitting of the committee, they brought a written reply to it, in which they admit that this avowal is not in their report to the Monthly Meeting, and assign the most futile and sophistical reasons. I can easily imagine, why it should be considered as being there, *in effect*, although it is not there, *in point of fact*. Whereas, after all this, Richard Bowman comes before you, and says, that the said testimony contains no new accusation! I then read their written admission of this fact, with my remarks thereon, as stated p. 225, 226. Richard Bowman's memory has also failed him in another respect. I never refused entering into any discussion with them, as the Monthly Meeting's committee, on this subject, but, on the contrary, as being connected with one of their original charges, I had, as their own report implies, never shrunk from an investigation of the real objects of the London Unitarian Book Society, but had pressed them to inform themselves better concerning them, as my minutes, which now lie on the table, would testify. From these it might also be shewn, that I preferred another reading of the first verses of John, to the rendering of that passage in the "Improved Version," which the respondents now alleged against me, not only, without any evidence, but in the face of the most conclusive evidence, the nature of the case would admit. The same may be said of their attempt to represent me

as having professed an approval of the whole text, and of the notes of the "Improved Version," which I had never done. For, as to the notes, I believe I have never read them all, and as to the text, I could, if it were necessary, adduce positive evidence, that I had, very soon after its first appearance, expressed my disapprobation of the manner, in which some passages were rendered.

As to the interference of members of other Meetings, I had grounded all I said upon this subject on the language of the overseers, as stated in my minutes, the correctness of which they soon after admitted; viz. that Henry Knight had spoken of them, as *at least nine or ten Friends*, and Richard Bowman, as *many Friends* of other Meetings; whereas the latter would now persuade you he had only spoken of one, or two. See p. 3 and 11.

With regard to the passage the respondents adduced, from Penn's Innocency with her Open Face, [inserted p. 150] if they had shewn how it can be better reconciled with the obvious tenor of his Sandy Foundation Shaken, or with other parts of his writings, than in the way I have attempted, the production of it might have been something to the purpose. I made this comparison many years ago, with much serious attention, and the conclusion I then formed, appears to me still to be well-founded. The quotations from Isaac Penington, are of such passages as I had long thought decidedly Unitarian, attributing no other divinity to Christ than that of the Father which dwelt in him. They are given p. 249—252.

Several of the quotations from the writings of Verrax, and especially the last, are unfairly, uncandidly, and partially made; but as all who consult these passages, with the context, may see this, I shall wave the intention I had expressed, of now exposing the injustice of such a selection, depending upon it that the Meeting will not suffer itself to be

biased in its judgment by these supplementary charges. Before I sit down, it appears to me proper to notice, that the report of your committee says nothing about the proceedings being regular and orderly, as it appears to me every committee, presenting a report, confirming a sentence of disownment, ought to be prepared to do. Instead of which, if I gathered it correctly, it only states their opinion to be, that the decision of the Monthly Meeting should be confirmed. But whether this unanimous judgment of the committee, be founded on a principle of supposed expediency, or on what other grounds, does not appear. From the sentiments several of the committee expressed, on the incorrect description of my offences in the Monthly Meeting's minutes, and the decisive manner, in which several of them also expressed their sense, of the great injustice of putting a man upon his trial, upon certain specific charges, and during such trial, bringing forward other matters of accusation against him, I cannot suppose the committee could have been equally unanimous upon either of these points. That new charges have been adduced, during the investigation of the original accusations, cannot, with truth, be denied. They were not brought forward, as the respondents attempted to shew, before your committee, as evidence, to establish those charges, but as additional and distinct accusations, as the records of the Monthly Meeting would shew.

In presenting this appeal to the Quarterly Meeting, I have acted, after much deliberation, upon my own conviction of the propriety of so doing, and contrary to the advice of several of my Friends, whose judgment, on most occasions, I much prefer to my own. I however exercised the right of appeal, without any sanguine expectation of the decision being in my favour. I had for too long a time, and with too much attention, observed the course of similar proceedings,

to permit my indulging such hopes. I was previously well satisfied of the justice of a remark, which was made many years ago, by a man of uncommon talents, of high estimation in the Society, and of an independent character of mind, *the late Job Scott*, who observed, when in Europe, "that so great was the prepossession among the members of the Society, in every quarter, of the Society having acted with propriety, in its inferior adjudications, that he thought no private individual, had a fair probability of succeeding in an appeal to the superior Meetings." Such were the discouraging impressions under which I presented myself before you, as an appellant. It was not, however, on any private ground, but because I believed it to be my duty so to do, in the cause of the rights of private judgment, and of pure, scriptural, Christian truth.

I have now only to advert, very briefly, to an incident of a most affecting nature, which unexpectedly fell in my way, returning home one day the week before last, which has nevertheless been a support, and a consolation to me under these proceedings. It was this. I called on a friend of mine, whom I had seen but the day before, in good health and spirits. The next morning I found him under great apparent dejection of mind ; so much so, that he at first seemed almost unable to speak. I thought it arose from some sudden illness ; but soon after he said, I have been this morning, for two hours, by the side of a death-bed. The faculties of the deceased were unimpaired to the last ; he was calm, collected and resigned. He sent for me, wishing to impart some things which weighed heavily upon his mind, as the awful period of his dissolution approached.

Of these, that which he found by far the most heavy, was, that he had been many years fully convinced of the truth and of the importance of certain Christian doctrines, and yet, had never professed or acted as if he be-

lieved them, but had rather lent his countenance to opposite principles. For such unfaithful conduct, he acknowledged he deserved many, and severe stripes, which he nevertheless trusted his heavenly Father, to whose will he resigned himself, would administer in mercy. It is out of my power to say, how much I have been encouraged by this seasonable, instructive, and affecting event; and I hope, when I approach the same awful scene, which must be before many more years have elapsed, perhaps much sooner, I may not, in addition to my other failings, and infirmities, have my last hours in this life, embittered by a consciousness of similar unfaithfulness to my own convictions of Christian, and highly important scriptural doctrines.

Soon after this, the respondents and myself, having waved the right of being farther heard, were requested to withdraw. Luke Howard asked leave to retire with us, which he did, and we waited a short time in the Clerk's office, when we were informed the Meeting had adjourned to four o'clock to morrow afternoon.

QUARTERLY MEETING OF LONDON AND
MIDDLESEX,

Held by Adjournment, 11th Month, 17th, 1812.

After the usual time of silence, the Clerk observed that the business remaining to be done, was for the Meeting to consider, whether the decision of Ratcliff Meeting should be confirmed, agreeably to the judgment of the committee? After another interval of silence,

Joseph Rutter said, I have no acquaintance with the appellant, and I trust, my mind is free from any improper bias. I make no pretensions to judgment in matters of theological controversy, but

I have attentively heard what the appellant has said, and I think him a very respectable man. If Friends could own him as a member of the Society, I should feel well satisfied. I observe the Friends of Ratcliff have *questioned* the appellant, a mode of proceeding, which I do not think can be right, nor can I approve any such measures, nor any thing that does not admit toleration. I could therefore wish that the report of the committee might be reversed.

John Arch, proposed that the appeal might be read.

Joseph Gurney Bevan replied, I have no doubt but that the substance of the appeal is fresh in the memory of Friends. (a) To hear it again, would take considerable time, and to enter into the particulars of it, would be to enter into a wide field of investigation. (b) The question before the Meeting seems to be, whether the appellant was, or was not, one in principle with Friends! (c)

(a) When the reader considers all that had intervened, since my appeal was read at an early part of the first sitting of the Meeting, the day before, this plea against its being read again, must, I think, appear very extraordinary, especially as many Friends came into the Meeting, during the reading of my appeal, or afterwards, and as it was read, neither impressively, nor so audibly, as to be generally heard. Nor will it appear less extraordinary, that such an objection should prove successful.

(b) I cannot perceive the force of these objections. If the matter contained in the appeal was relevant, and "in favour of the appellant," it ought to have been considered deliberately by the Meeting, previous to its decision, although it might have been "to enter into a wide field of investigation."

(c) This is to direct the attention of the Meeting, not to the question at issue, between the respondents and myself, but to one of much more difficult solution, and of so vague a nature, as to be totally unfit for judicial inquiry, which should always be confined to matters capable of proof, and not be extended to such, as can only be judged of by feeling and prejudice. On such a plea as this, a secret junta of disciplinarians may, without evidence, or the sanction of any known

A Friend desired the committee's report might be read.

J. G. Bevan replied, he had objected to the reading of the appeal ; and therefore *he must object* to the reading of the report. (*d*) The appeal was in favour of the appellant ; the report was against him. (*e*) It would be unfair to admit the reading of the latter, and to preclude the reading of the former ; but both he thought might be spared. (*f*)

Thomas Sturge requested, that the testimony of disownment might be read ; to the best of his recollection, it was expressed in a loose and general manner ; nothing specific and definite. This proposal being objected to, by some Friends near the table, where some of the most active disciplinarians usually sit, another Friend rose, and pointed out the absolute necessity of reading this document, since the committee, as appeared by their report, were of opinion, that it ought to be confirmed ; but how could

rule, effect the disownment of any person who may have opposed their intolerance, and refused to receive their construction of texts of Scripture, and to profess their catalogue of unscriptural articles of faith.

(*d*) This is to urge one wrong measure, to justify another, on the profession too of impartiality. It is also in effect, to tell the Meeting, it was better to determine the question without any proper evidence.

(*e*) If so, these documents should have been compared. Had I imagined the evening before, that the Meeting would have come to a decision, without having my appeal read again, I should have called their attention to it, article by article, that it might have been distinctly seen, and generally understood, whether any, and which of its allegations, had been disproved by the respondents. Such was my intention, but I waved it, because I was unwilling to occupy more of the time of the Meeting.

(*f*) I cannot agree that such a conclusion as this, is compatible with either impartiality, or justice. It is rather to substitute *feeling* for *evidence*, and to prefer *darkness* to *light*.

the Meeting judge of that, without hearing it, and precisely knowing its contents.

The testimony of disownment was then read.

——— apologized for offering his sentiments, but informed the Meeting, that in his apprehension, it was evident, the appellant's principles were not the same with those of Friends.

George Harrison said, although the rules which have been adopted by the Quarterly Meeting, for the regulation of its proceedings on cases of appeal, appear to be fair and impartial in *theory*, yet in *practice* they do not seem to fit all cases, nor do they quite fit this case, satisfactorily to me.

After the appellant and respondents have been fully heard, they are required to leave the Meeting, but were they suffered to remain under the restriction of silence, it might perhaps be better: because after so much *pro* and *con*, it is natural to suppose, that things may be said, to which many in the Meeting might wish to advert in *the hearing* of the parties; for my own part, it is far the most pleasant to me, to speak in such a case, face to face.

In the plea, or defence, which the appellant has read, among other quotations from the writings of our early Friends, he has given us one, from high authority; namely, William Penn, importing that in the earliest times of Christianity, the only article of belief required, was, *that Jesus was the Messiah*; in this I think William Penn was not correct; for in the New Testament it stands thus,—to believe *that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he rose from the dead*, gave a title to Christian fellowship, and to the name of a believer, and under this simple bond of union, Christians in apostolic times, *agreed together*. The times indeed are altered, *but Christianity remains the same.* (g)

(g) It is plain, from the quotation alluded to, that William Penn

The respondents, in their reply to the statement of the appellant, adduce many authorities of our early Friends, contravening the statement of the appellant, and at length, to my surprise, turn over the pages of a thick octavo volume, to find matter of crimination against him. If this is deemed *fair Dealing*, I doubt some of us, through whose hands many books have passed, with some portion of approbation, must be deemed culpable, and as to our booksellers, *they* must be in guilt up to the ears.

I wish to advert to the case before the Meeting, merely as a *case of discipline*, and the *mode of administering the discipline*, without reference to the offence charged ; for whether *that* be an error in religious opinion, or an error in conduct, an act of moral turpitude, it makes no difference in my opinion of the case.

In the report of the Friends, appointed by Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, to visit and *deal* with the appellant, they say, *We questioned him* on some important points of doctrine, &c. and afterwards add, “to which *he decidedly refused to answer.*” Now these latter words, if they meant any thing, can only have been meant to aggravate the charge against the appellant, and sorry I am to find, that the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff sanctioned that report, without any expression of disapprobation of the mode of treating the party accused.

Perhaps it was not within the province of the committee of appeals, in the report before us, to advert to such a mode of administering the discipline ; but I think it would be worthy of the Quarterly Meeting, to mark with disapprobation such a mode of treatment. *We questioned him.* What should we think

considered a belief that Christ was raised from the dead, as included in the belief that he was the Messiah. As I do also. See the passage in p. 332, as read in the Meeting, the latter part of which, seems to have escaped the notice of George Harrison.

of a counsel for the crown, who, after the Grand Jury had found a bill of indictment against a culprit, should betake himself to the culprit, and *question* him on the subject of the charges brought against him, and endeavour to extract from him matter of accusation ; and when the offender is arraigned before the court, the same counsel should tell the judge and jury, I *questioned* the culprit, but he *refused* to answer?

Would any sober, competent judge, approve of such a mode of interrogatory ? Would any impartial jury admit, that it was justice to resort to the offender, for the purpose of establishing, or corroborating the proof of his offence ? Surely not.

I hope not to live to see the day, when the Society shall be prepared to fraternize with Dominican monks, and to establish an inquisition in every Monthly Meeting, within this quarter, and by example and influence, throughout the Society, in the kingdom.

After a few minutes pause, he resumed. What I have further to say, on the subject before the Meeting, is this: when a Monthly Meeting enters upon record, the name of a member of the Society as a delinquent, it is usual, and that, from a regard to its own character, previously to ascertain the truth of the charge brought against the said member ; the Friends therefore who are deputed to *deal* with him, on the part of the Meeting, either know the truth of such charge, or they do not know it. *If they know it*, then, by questioning the offender about it, they incur the imputation of what is commonly called *hypocrisy*. *If they do not know it*, then it may turn out to be false, and in that case, they seem to place themselves in the predicament of tale-bearers, and detractors. It is for them to extricate themselves from this dilemma.

With respect to the appellant, it is clear, that he has not concealed, or disguised his sentiments, and

therefore all who have heard him, will admit, that he possesses that super-eminent, indispensable, quality of religious profession, *sincerity*. But from the tenor of what he has said, it seems to be a painful consideration to him, to be severed, in Society fellowship, from his friends. I feel for him. I feel for his family—individually, and for his valuable relatives.

Before I sit down, I will just add, that no one who has heard me, will, I think, say that I have, in any manner endeavoured to invalidate the doctrines of the Society; such was certainly not my intention, my view was to promote and recommend, a correct and proper mode of administering the discipline amongst us; for however salutary and excellent, our system of discipline may be, and salutary and excellent, generally speaking, I admit it to be, yet, if it is improperly, or injudiciously administered, it may, and will become, a bane, instead of a blessing to the Society.

Stephen Matthews said, I am glad to hear the remarks of the Friend who has just sat down, and had they not been made, I believe I should not have been easy, without making remarks, in a degree, similar. Nor is this the first time I have had occasion to notice the impropriety of the practice, of questioning Friends. If there is proof against any one, let it be brought forward. But if the practice of Monthly Meetings, deputing Friends to question their members, should increase, I believe it would cause great disorder in the Society.

With respect to the case before the Meeting, looking at it every way, I do not see just ground for the disownment of the Friend.

On reading the Scripture records, (continued *Stephen Matthews*,) we may differ one from another, respecting their import, and if any one should form an opinion, somewhat different from that of the gene-

rality of Friends, *let him enjoy his opinion*. He may be a worthy and useful member of the Society, and stand approved in the sight of the Almighty, notwithstanding his opinions may be somewhat different from those of the generality of Friends.

A Friend then proposed, that if no one felt a concern to object to the committee's judgment, that it be accounted the sense of the Meeting, and be complied with accordingly. (*h*)

John Coleby, (the Clerk) requested that more Friends would speak their minds.

Francis Joshua, with a becoming solicitude, invited Friends to express their minds freely. He reminded them, that it would be the last opportunity they would possess. He did not consider this, as a private or personal case, for many Friends were involved. So many hours had elapsed since the appeal was read, that he wished it to be read again.

Thomas Compton said, I cannot bear to sit in the Meeting, and hear my son-in-law condemned, and disowned, without protesting against such proceedings. I can never approve the practice, which the visiting Friends adopted in this case, of questioning the party visited. And I must say, if the Meeting should confirm the decision of the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff, it would be to give their sanction to this hateful practice, which, so far as I know, has never been before, so countenanced in the administration of the discipline. The Society has never thought fit to compile a creed, nor have its members ever been called upon, to subscribe any confession of articles of faith.

(*h*) This proposal may appear to *some* of my readers, very ill-timed, and almost incredible, but I am well assured its import is correctly stated, and in its proper place, directly after the two preceding speeches, the purport of which, pertinent and impressive as they are, this Friend seems either not to have understood, or to have forgotten.

On such subjects I am decidedly of opinion, that the principles of the Society are not fully and correctly known, by its members generally. For my own part, I acknowledge that my sentiments are similar to those of the appellant, and they are such as I have held from my youth.

George Stacey said, the Society certainly had peculiar, and specific principles, which were *largely diffused in the various writings of Friends*. If any members neglected these writings, read them without proper attention, or failed in understanding their meaning, the Society could not be answerable for the ignorance, or misapprehension of such members. (i) It was nevertheless true, that the Society had peculiar and specific principles. With regard to the Friends of Ratcliff, *questioning* the appellant, I may say, I am against such a procedure *in general*, yet I think cases might occur, in which *it might be proper*. I will not undertake to defend the whole of the proceedings, in this case, but the appellant having been charged with being the author called Verax, I think he might have been glad of the opportunity of declaring his innocence, if innocent he were. (k)

(i) If so, *which I grant*, how can the Society be justified, in censuring and disowning its members, for such involuntary errors? The right of censuring and disowning, can, I presume, only be defended on the opposite presumption, and is generally placed on that ground, even in testimonies of disownment. Besides which, the more *largely* these principles are diffused, the more difficult it may be to understand them. Admitting the Society has peculiar and specific principles, the proper question is, whether it can be justified in disowning its members, on account of such supposed errors, in point of faith, for which it is not answerable?

(k) The impropriety of the *questioning* system, *in general*, is here admitted, but the occasional use of it, is contended for, as *proper*, and even as advantageous to the party accused. It proceeds, nevertheless, on the unsound principle, of admitting accusers to shift their charges, at their own discretion, and of imputing criminality, from a mere refusal to answer interrogatories!

George Harrison said, I cannot admit the propriety of questioning a person accused, after public *dealing* had commenced, in any case, or under any circumstances. If the offence charged, were not previously ascertained to be well founded, how could a Meeting of discipline be justified in recording it? And if it were, it must be wholly unnecessary, as well as improper, to question the party accused.

A Friend observed, that he made no great pretensions to knowledge, nor was he conversant in such matters, as had been so largely spoken of, by the appellant. He trusted, however, he did know a little how to distinguish right from wrong; and many things which had been said, had hurt his mind much. But what had hurt his mind most of all, was the extract which opposed the doctrine of divine influence. (l)

(l) I do not know who this Friend was, but he seems to have acquired the habit of judging, not *by evidence*, but by his *feeling*. Not by consulting his *reason*, but his *prejudices*. It is therefore no wonder he should be swayed in his judgment, and hurt in his feelings, by an extract which was very improperly introduced, as it has no relation whatever, to the charges exhibited against me.

I am aware, however, that many persons may, and do apprehend themselves, incapable of understanding the Scriptures, without the immediate agency of the divine Spirit, on their minds. But after professing to seek scriptural knowledge, in this way, seven years, after seven years, what has been the result? Their knowledge has abounded with obscurity, incongruity, and puerility. They have attained little, or no knowledge, by which they could benefit themselves, or their fellow-creatures.

Such persons may be very orthodox in their own estimation, and in that of many of their brethren, may be exceedingly conversant with the letter of the Scriptures, and yet profess to entertain the greatest dislike imaginable, to reading them, "like a critic." Such persons sometimes gravely say, that those passages of Scripture, which inform us that Christ opened the eyes of the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, are misunderstood by those *who dwell in the outward*. According to them, these passages do not relate to corporeal blindness and deafness, but they mean that Christ opened the spiritual eyes, and unstopped the spiritual ears, of those whom

John Bevans said, I have to complain of a want of fairness and candour in the appellant, for having exhibited his quotations from the writings of Friends, in a partial, and mutilated a state. He has also misrepresented the Scriptures. He has asserted, that "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, &c." is always applied to the Father only. The example was taken from the 1st ch. of Rev. but if Friends would read the last ch. of the same book, they would see the same words applied to Christ. (*m*) With the Meeting's permission, I

he found spiritually blind and deaf. These are dangerous errors, and I would earnestly recommend such Friends, as may have any doubts on this important subject, seriously, and attentively to read, with a view to their solution, the records of the New Testament, and especially the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles. Such persons may also read, with much advantage, Locke's excellent chapter on Enthusiasm, in his Essay on the Human Understanding, book 4, ch. 19.

(*m*) The reader who compares my quotations with the passages referred to, may decide on the justice of these general accusations. I cannot admit they are well founded, and nothing can be more groundless, than the specific allegation intended to support them. I made no such assertion, having long known, that Christ was called in the Scriptures, "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," as being, *under God*, the appointed author, and finisher of the new dispensation.

The example referred to, was taken from the 1st ch. of Rev. but it was adduced to shew, not, that the terms *Alpha and Omega* are always applied in the Scriptures, to God the Father only, but that *omnipotence*, or underived, unlimited power, is in those writings, only ascribed unto him, see p. 280. Apparently admitting the correctness of this example, so far as the scriptural application of the terms *Alpha and Omega*, to God the Father are concerned, John Bevans pronounces, that "if Friends would read the last ch. of the same book, they would see the same words applied to Christ." Will they indeed? Many learned men have thought so, and among them Archbishop Newcome, who was so fully persuaded, that such was the true meaning of the text, that he has inserted the words "*saieth Jesus*," in the 7th and 12th verses, of that chapter, making him the speaker on both occasions. But if so, Jesus Christ, *forbad John to worship him*, saying, "See thou do it not: I am a fellow servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets—WORSHIP GOD."

will shew how, and to what extent, the appellant has misrepresented the writings of Friends. I will read the passages, in their proper connexion, and original form, and then compare the appellant's quotations with them. I think I could do this, in about half an hour.

Thomas Compton, addressing John Bevans, said, "Dost thou mean to accuse my son-in-law of a breach of veracity?" John Bevans answered, "Not wilful."

J. G. Bevan then remarked, if the request of John Bevans were acceded to, by the Meeting, the appellant must, no doubt, be admitted, to hear what might be said, and to defend himself. But I am of opinion, that it would be better for the Meeting, not to go into any business of the kind. (n)

The Primate, however, having inserted those words, without any authority from the Greek text, the editors of the "Improved Version" did not think proper to follow his example, it being of the utmost importance to distinguish between the language of the text itself, and any inference from it. However clear and obvious that inference may seem, it ought always to appear in its true character. It is natural for those who are most firmly impressed with the divine origin of the Christian religion, as *a special revelation from God*, and believe that the New Testament contains the only authentic record of this Revelation, to be most anxious to distinguish the genuine text, from the errors of transcribers, and the spurious additions of corrupt interpolators. While on the other hand, those who make no proper distinction, between that special effusion of the Holy Spirit, in the age of the apostles, and that moral sense, or divine influence on the human mind, which is common to all good, and pious men, of every age and profession of religion, as naturally deem it of little consequence, that the text of the Scriptures should be correct. Such men are apt, when only indulging their own groundless fancies, to imagine themselves, almost infallibly, led into all truth.

(n) That is as much as to say, general or particular charges made against an accused person, in his absence, may be suffered to pass without contradiction, but evidence in support of them must not be adduced, without admitting him to hear what might be said, and to defend himself. This is, I think, to approve the far greater evil, of the two. If I must be accused in my absence, I had rather it should be upon

X George Harrison then said, as I suppose John Bevens is exceedingly conversant in the writings of our early Friends, I wish to be informed by him, as matter of curiosity, whether he has ever, in any of those writings, met with the phrase "the eternal divinity of Christ?" John Bevens answered, "I have met with the phrase 'the eternity of Christ,' in a tract of William Penn's which stands in his works before the Sandy Foundation Shaken." That is, said J. G. Bevan, "The Guide Mistaken." [It is, however, in Vol. II. p. 3—31.]

A Friend observed, he thought the Meeting not sufficiently unanimous to come to any decision at that time; and therefore he would propose that the consideration of the case be adjourned.

Edmund Matthews said. It is with the greatest difficulty I rise to speak on the present occasion; in such an assembly as this; but I should think myself wanting in duty, as a member of this Quarterly Meeting, and as a Christian, if I did not endeavour to express a few sentiments, which are upon my mind.—I think this matter should be treated with the greatest seriousness, because the appellant is neither a hypocrite, nor a lukewarm Christian; but he is one, who can adopt the apostolic language, after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers.

I am sorry I cannot unite in opinion with our Friend George Stacey, that the appellant might, with propriety, be interrogated with respect to his being the author called Verax, because he had been said to be so in print—I know not who made this declaration. I have not seen the book in which it is to be found, but

evidence, than without it. In this case, I am confident, a little examination would have disproved the charge. But it was thought "better for the Meeting not to go into any business of the kind." And thus no opportunity was allowed me, to repel a charge so publicly made!

X Isaac Pennington calls him "The eternal
 Son of God" Works, Vol. III. p. 236
 4th Edition

I believe the author had no ground, no evidence whatever, for such an assertion, besides that of strong suspicion. Much as I unite with the chief of what our Friend, George Harrison has said, I wonder at his bringing into view, the reception of the belief, that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. I should be exceedingly surprised, if Thomas Foster were unwilling to admit it. I believe he would not be.

I am of the same mind as our Friend, Thomas Compton, with respect to the principles of the Society being obscurely and imperfectly known. I do not mean that our doctrines are not definitely and precisely laid down, by Penn and Barclay, but I mean the principles of our Society as it at present exists. We were told last evening, that Friends held the doctrine which is commonly known by the name of Sabellianism. But I consider the Society as divided into three classes. There may be many Sabellians. There may be many Unitarians. And I am convinced, there are many, who have no belief about the matter; because they have never made it a subject of serious consideration, and investigation.

With respect to three of the articles in the instrument of disownment, (and they are so weighty, that I almost tremble to name them; the divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord, his omnipotence, and the propriety of secret supplication unto him,) I conceive the appellant to have fully shewn, *that he is supported by Scripture*. As to you, Friends, who make your own private ideas, your rule of faith, consider the awfulness of your responsibility. To your own Master, the Father of light, and life, *you must stand, or fall*.

I say again, we have not to do with a hypocrite, or with a lukewarm Christian; but with one who

is able to say with the apostle, "after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." As to the questioning system, I utterly disapprove it, in every shape and form.

The paper of disownment I consider as containing a false charge against the appellant; "that he has joined a society who publicly avow their disbelief of the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Whereas, it appears to be a *Book Society* only; and I think, were I a person of opulence, I should have no objection to belong to such a society, though there would no doubt be a great number of points, on which we should differ in sentiment.

With respect to such of the charges as are true, I do not conceive them to be of sufficient magnitude to justify disownment. The appellant read a quotation last evening, (whether from a written, or printed document I know not,) from our late friend, Job Scott, [p. 343] in which he expresses it to be his opinion, that an appellant in our Society is not likely to obtain justice. I fear it is so in the present case, and that many friends are afraid to express their minds, lest they should be *dealt with* by their respective Monthly Meetings.

I do not know that it is necessary to say much more, but I would again call the attention of Friends to the assertion, that the appellant is the author called Verax. I consider it, a spunging declaration; and I do not know why the author of the tracts, under the signature of Verax, should be brought into view any more than the author of the pamphlet, signed Vindex.

William Allen observed, that whenever a society has been formed, and its principles agreed upon, and adopted, it was not warrantable for any of its members to deviate, and still to claim the right of membership. In England, these matters are ordered very

well. (o) There is ample toleration and liberty ; for every one classes, or may class himself, in that society, with which his principles correspond. (p)

(o) It was eloquently said, some time ago, at a Bible meeting at which I was present, that it was almost impossible for a person to breathe the air of the room, without catching some perception of the general feeling—without finding his views elevated—the intellect expanded, and the heart improved, by the topics which had been that day discussed. There seems, I am sorry to say, something equally influential, but of an opposite tendency, within the walls of a Meeting of Discipline, on such occasions as the present. How else shall I account for the expression of such narrow, sectarian, I had almost said Popish sentiments as these, by a man whose energies are zealously applied *elsewhere*, in the furtherance of a spirit of liberality, such as I have noticed in p. 241 to 243. In no other place could such a man forget, that religious liberty is still imperfectly enjoyed in our native land—that there are many persecuting statutes, which yet disgrace our Statute Book.

(p) There may, in some cases, be much more difficulty, in such an arrangement, than this statement represents.

A young friend of mine, who heard this speech, seems to be suitably impressed with these difficulties, and has favoured me with the following remarks on them :—he says, “The Society existed long before ourselves. We were its members before we were three months old ; consequently we could not then comprehend, or assent to its principles. Many Friends, of age to examine and judge for themselves, may feel a great predilection for the Society, and for many of its principles and practices. Yet they may dissent, however reluctantly, from some of their friends, respecting other principles and practices.

“Are they then to leave the Society and go to another? They may see no Society whose principles so nearly accord with their own. If they did see one, equal in their estimation to their own, it would not be warrantable to change, because it would be changing for an unworthy motive. They may, nevertheless, ardently wish to remain members of the Society. Here then toleration and Christian liberty are wanting, *and ought to be seen*.

“William Allen speaks of deviation, as though it were an act of volition ; whereas, it is demonstrable that no man has the power to change his belief ; though he has the power to change his profession of belief. As to deviation, who can say where the deviation is? Who can measure its extent? Before this can be done, the Society must fix the boundary between its fundamental, and other principles. They must express their fundamental principles, not in general and ambiguo.

It appears, (said William Allen) a very clear case, that the appellant is a member of another Society. (*q*) I presume no Friend could suppose that the appellant had proved his principles to be those of our early Friends. We had heard one side only of the case. We had heard things only partially. If we were to go into the subject, we must have books and pamphlets ; we must have records and documents. (*r*)

ous phrases, and in words of equivocal meaning ; but in a full, clear and correct manner."

(*q*) Had not William Allen been enveloped in the atmosphere, to which I have already alluded, I presume he could not have made an assertion so totally destitute of evidence to support it, so entirely unfounded. It is a new mode of making out "a very clear case," to rest it upon a mere *ipse dixit*. Such an assertion, on such an occasion, implies, much too plainly to have been otherwise understood, that I had become a member of another *religious* Society, which is not true. For although the term *religious* be not used, it is *necessarily implied*. And this, be it remembered, is the language, not of a professed advocate against me, but of a person exercising the province of a judge, addressing his Peers on the bench, in their judicial capacity, on whom, to a considerable extent, I have reason to believe, it made this erroneous and injurious impression.

(*r*) What William Allen meant by saying one side only of the case had been heard, I am at a loss to understand. But it is "very clear," that both sides should have been impartially heard, and what they said, been deliberately considered, before judgment was pronounced. Some persons who were present, thought the quotations produced by the respondents and myself, from the writings of the early friends, were of themselves so far from being on "one side only of the case," as to afford an infallible proof that the writers of those passages were fallible men. Yet are we told that one side only has been heard !

If I have failed in proving my principles "to be those of our early Friends," which I do not know that I ever undertook on so broad a scale as this ; for like Joseph Gurney Bevan, and many others, I cannot always reconcile their tenets with each other, I may ask, why did not William Allen bring the respondents to the same test ?

They told me, as I informed the Meeting, that they had nothing to do with the opinions of Barclay, on a most important, nay a fundamental Christian doctrine, with which doctrine I fully concurred.

Reason, (continued William Allen) is a high and valuable gift, and a useful gift in its place ; but it can never bring man to a right understanding of revelation. His endeavours to search out the things appertaining to divinity, by the exercise of his own natural powers, is a vain endeavour, and a fruitless attempt. If we sincerely desire to know the Scriptures, and to be benefitted by them, we must suffer our minds to be brought under the dominion of that divine power that gave them forth. We must seek after, and be attentive to divine influence and supernatural instruction. (s) I much esteem the general

Besides which, the proper question was not, whether I had made, or failed in such an attempt, but whether the respondents had proved, such a deviation from the requisite conditions of religious fellowship, as by any known rule of the Society, subjected me to disownment. This, they neither did, nor attempted. Nor do I understand, how it can with propriety be affirmed, that the parties were "only partially heard." I rather think the fact was, the pleas the respect ve parties offered, were much more fully heard, than deliberately and impartially considered. "If we were to go into the subject," says this ecclesiastical judge, "we must have books and pamphlets—records and documents." And why not? If these were necessary, they ought to have been called for. But how that can be, if "one side only" has been heard, William Allen did not explain. He contented himself with stating the supposed difficulty of the requisite examination, if the Meeting "were to go into the subject," and after an irrelevant exposition of his own theological sentiments, concluded with pronouncing judgment against the Appellant, not upon any one of the charges recorded as the ground of his disownment, but on an entirely new accusation !

(s) Whether this disquisition on reason, and revelation, be in itself judicious, or otherwise, it may suffice for me to remark, that it has no relation to the recorded charges against me, and that I left the Meeting in the confidence that no other charges would be adduced, without animadversion, and the party who might fall into such an error, being called to order. My protest against such conduct was disregarded. I would, however, give my readers the following remarks of a friend of mine, on this part of the speech.

"William Allen's notions of revelation," says he, "are to me incomprehensible, and I think he greatly underrates the intellectual powers of man, given him, through nature, by his Almighty and be-

character of the appellant; but I think it is plain, from an *extract* out of a work of his, read yesterday evening, that he rejected the well-known fundamental doctrine of the Society, and I am of opinion that the report of the committee *ought to be confirmed.* (t)

nescent Creator. For the sake of perspicuity, I shall divide the subject into two parts, reason, and immediate revelation—reason, and the Scriptures.

“Whenever I suppose a revelation, I suppose a *Giver*, something given, and a receiver of the gift. The receiver is man. If he had not a recipient and comprehending power, no revelation could possibly take place. If he had no comprehending power, where would be the use of an interpretation, by the same divine Being who gave the original revelation? The interpretation would be a new revelation, and consequently need interpretation as much as the former, and so it would be, *ad infinitum*.

“If man has a power to comprehend the interpretation, why can he not understand the original revelation? If he has no power to comprehend either, no revelation can possibly take place. But as Christians generally admit, that mankind have received, and have been greatly benefited by revelations from the Almighty; so I presume, that man has a power of comprehending such manifestations. I grant, that things may be made known to man, which he may not fully comprehend. Such, were some of the predictions given to the prophets. Such, were some of the views given to the apostle John; but who would infer from hence, *that mystery, is an essential characteristic of revelation?*

“The ground being thus cleared, the second part of my subject becomes sufficiently easy. If man can comprehend a revelation immediately presented, why may he not comprehend the same revelation, when it comes to him, through the medium of a fellow-creature, clothed in human thought, and accurately expressed in human language?”

(t) This “*extract*” is given p. 203, with the context at large p. 200—205, from whence it will appear, on comparing it with the charges against me, that it is nothing to the purpose, and that it cannot justify the inference drawn from it by William Allen, for it was expressly adduced by me, not to prove an exact coincidence of opinion, between the modern Unitarians, and the Quakers, on this subject, but to shew “that the real difference of opinion, between those who are supposed to take opposite sides of the question, *may not be so great, as is generally imagined.*” For this *philanthropic* attempt, am I deemed, *by such a man*, unworthy of Christian fellowship.

Richard Payne observed, that it did not appear from any thing which had been laid before the Meeting, that such charges as William Allen had imputed to the appellant, were at all adverted to in the minutes of Ratcliff Meeting, which had been read, and that he thought the conduct of its overseers and committee had been so improper and irregular, that the Quarterly Meeting could do no less, than reverse the decision of the Monthly Meeting.

Jasper Capper expressed his concurrence in these sentiments.

William Forster, Jun. said, "I am of the mind the report of the committee should be confirmed."

Josiah Messer [an elder] said, he thought by far too much blame had been imputed to the Friends of Ratcliff respecting their putting questions to the appellant. Indeed he appeared to think they deserved no blame at all; for he explicitly avowed, that he always thought that Friends, or Monthly Meetings, *possessed a discretionary power, to do their own business in their own way.* (u)

In justice to William Allen, I think it right to say, that he intended to have expressed his disapprobation of the questioning system, adopted in this case, and was afterwards sorry he did not. I also regret it, for if he had impressively reprobated *the practice*, it might have formed by far the best part of his speech. But he must then have exposed the *practice itself*, as pernicious and indefensible, and not merely the imprudence of confessing on the Meeting's records, that the discipline had been exercised *on such unsound principles*. It is not improbable, that the same system may be pursued in other cases, with equal perseverance as in this, and yet no record of it may appear, *as there does in this instance*. It therefore behoves all persons, who may be hereafter *dealt with in like manner*, strenuously to resist every attempt of the kind, whatever professions of kind intentions may be made towards them, by any disciplinarians. Such inducements to be open and candid, were held out to me, by my visitors, in the fairest terms, the reader of these pages has seen the result, *and let him be aware of similar insidious approaches*.

(u) Such a power as this disciplinarian contends for, cannot be rightfully possessed, or exercised, in a Christian church. When

William Manley, [an elder] expressed his concurrence with the committee's decision, and said, he had observed that the appellant complained very much of the want of gospel order. Now, it did appear that he had been visited first by *one Friend*, and afterwards *by two*; and if this was not gospel order, *he did not know what was!*

John Pim expressed his concurrence with the committee's report. "I think," said he, "*the report feels pleasant to my mind.*" (v)

The Friend who proposed an adjournment now said, that he then apprehended many Friends in the Meeting did not feel unity with the committee's decision, on account of the manner in which the appel-

professed disciples of Christ, assume the right of censuring and expelling their brethren from religious fellowship, they should be especially careful, to act upon his maxims, not "their own," to confine themselves to such "power," as he has authorised them to exercise, *on his behalf*, and not to consider themselves as possessing "a discretionary power, to do their *own business*, in their *own way*." This is to claim the "exercise of dominion," to an unknown, and indefinite, if not to an unlimited extent. It is to set up no small portion of that authority over conscience, which Christ declared should be wholly excluded from his church, and from amongst his disciples. "*It shall not be so among you.*" In short, this mode of thinking, which Josiah Messer professes to have always entertained, is precisely that which has been pleaded, for the worst species of usurpation and tyranny, which mankind have ever known. When the rulers of churches get such ideas into their heads, they naturally become inflated with spiritual pride, and a pharisaic disposition of mind. Nor are these consequences of possessing ecclesiastical power, confined to the haughty priest nor to the lordly prelate, but may equally infect the high professing puritan, or the rigid, pharisaic sectarian.

(v) William Forster, Jun. and John Pim, are both approved ministers of the Society, and might have been supposed well qualified to assign their reasons, for the judgment they pronounced. But this they wholly omitted, nor did any Friend in the Meeting call upon either of them to explain the grounds of their opinion. How far it was becoming the sacred office of Christian ministers, to withhold their reasons on such an occasion, and lend their authority, let my readers judge.

lant had been treated, by the Friends of Ratcliff. But if the Meeting could overlook the proceedings alluded to, or could think them inadequate, as a ground whereon to reverse the judgment of the Monthly Meeting, he had no desire to put any bar in the way of the Meeting's prevalent sentiment. His own were not similar to the appellant's, but differed materially from them.

Several Friends then rose, one after another, and merely expressed their unity with the decision of the committee. (w) It was then declared by the Clerk, in the customary way, that the Meeting agreed to confirm the judgment of Ratcliff Meeting, of which a minute was accordingly made. (x)

(w) I cannot perceive what possible advantage such a mode as this, of declaring assent, or dissent, can have, over the equally expressive, and orderly method of elevating an arm, unless it be proper and right, delusively to pass off the judgment of a few, perhaps of much less than a tenth part of the persons present, as the collective judgment of the Meeting. A shew of hands would, in most cases, determine the general sense of a large assembly, in less time, and in a silent, decisive, and decorous manner; whereas, it is impossible to ascertain what the judgment of such a body is, where the great majority of the persons present, as is the usual case in these Meetings, do not signify their opinion on the question, *in any manner whatever*.

(x) It was natural I should wish to know, the general complexion of the discussion on this occasion, and, by the kindness of some of my friends, I have been furnished with a more ample, and, as I have reason to believe, a more accurate account than I previously expected. They are however in no degree accountable, for the use which I have thought fit to make of their information. The responsibility of publishing this account, rests wholly with myself; I have neither asked, nor acted upon the advice of any member of the Society.

But, relying as I do on the report of those Friends, confirmed as it has since been, by the concurring evidence of others who were present, I appeal with confidence to the impartial reader, whether it can be said, that the arguments of those who opposed the decision of the Meeting, were attempted to be answered? Nay, I appeal to such readers, whether any of the foregoing speeches, in favour of confirming the judgment of the Monthly Meeting, express one syllable in support of either of the allegations, on which the decision of that Meeting was ostensibly founded? I have personally made this appeal, to various persons who were present, without being able to learn that

*He seems to wish our meetings for the
business of the church to be managed
like Courts of law.*

When the said minute had been read, John Eliot rose, and expressed his satisfaction with the appel-

even one of the persons who spoke on that side of the question, mentioned, or alluded to any of the recorded charges, on which I was disowned, and against which my appeal was presented. Is it then, I ask, possible to conceive, that the confirmation of a sentence of disownment, under such circumstances, *was grounded upon reason or evidence?* How was the sense of so numerous an assembly ascertained? Several hundred persons were, I suppose, present; yet no counting of numbers was allowed; no shew of hands was exhibited. In short, the speeches furnished the only means of judging, what the general sense of the Meeting was. And these speeches seem to have operated, not by the weight of the reasoning they contained, or their relevance to the subject before the Meeting, but by the supposed "weight of religious character" of those who delivered them. Can there be a more delusive criterion? I should think not. Strange as this may appear to some of my readers, it is nothing new. Thomas Clarkson has noticed this method of judging of the sense of a large assembly, in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, Vol I. p. 240.

In p. 126, I observed, that this delusive mode of judging of the sense of Meetings for Discipline, has no parallel, that I knew of, in ancient or modern times. I ought perhaps rather to have said, that it was an awkward compound of the Presbyterian and Independent forms of transacting the business of their respective churches, without the peculiar advantages of either. The Kirk of Scotland is governed by Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, consisting of deputies, or representatives only. Among the Independents, no member of the church is excluded, and all have an equal right of expressing their sentiments upon any question of discipline, verbally, or *by a shew of hands*, as many members of the Society of Friends have lately expressed theirs, on questions no less important, or sacred, than such as occur at their Meetings for Discipline; I mean at Bible Meetings, where I have seen many of them uniting with their neighbours, in this simple, rational, orderly and decisive mode of ascertaining the general sense of the persons present. Whereas, the mode in use among themselves, is to leave the decision in the hands of the clergy and the presbytery, under other names, with the mere appearance only of its being exercised by the whole assembly.

Such a mode of implicating a large number of persons *in the real decision of a few*, or it may be *of one person only*, has a natural tendency to nourish a Pharisaic spirit of domination, in the rulers of such a sect, and of implicit submission to their authority, among the rest of its members. It discourages many valuable persons, possessing serious and liberal minds, from attending Meetings for discipline. It produces disgust, at the narrow spirit which generally actuates the

lant's conduct in the Meeting. He said, the appellant had not minced the matter, but had declared his mind and sentiments, candidly and manfully. In this, John Eliot was joined by several other Friends.

On the respondents and myself receiving notice by William Manley, that the Meeting had come to a conclusion, which we were at liberty to attend and hear read, we were introduced to seats near the table; when, after a short pause, the Clerk read the following minute.

“This Meeting, having deliberately considered

most zealous disciplinarians, and generates a spirit of lukewarmness in many of its members, to all that is connected with such a system. “Zeal,” said William Penn, “with knowledge, and dipped in charity, is good; without them, good for nothing.”

I ought perhaps to add, that although I have given regular notice of appeal to the Yearly Meeting against this decision, and six respondents are appointed by the Quarterly Meeting, on its behalf, I am now more and more doubtful, whether I shall exercise the right, I have thus thought proper to secure. It is not “*convenient*” to me to present such appeal to the ensuing Yearly Meeting; in which case, the rules allow my deferring it to the next. Besides which, a projected alteration in the mode of hearing and judging of appeals, has been *publicly*, and privately spoken of, as likely to take place. Whether the proposed change may be, to deprive the respective parties of the right of being heard in the Meeting, on being dissatisfied with the report of a committee, or, to provide some more rational mode than the present, of taking the sense of the Meeting at large, if the privilege of being heard therein be continued, I shall not object to either, in the character of an appellant.

I cannot even imagine, that I shall ever feel a wish to be restored to membership, after this decision of the Quarterly Meeting. I would not willingly, *be deemed an intruder any where*, and on this principle, I had nearly concluded to have sent in my resignation as a member of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, if the judgment of that Meeting had been reversed by the Quarterly Meeting, as several of my Friends know. Much more should I be so inclined, after its confirmation by so large a body, even supposing both those decisions to be reversed by the Yearly Meeting.

Nothing but such an open renunciation of the general principles, and spirit, on which these proceedings were founded, as I cannot expect to take place in the ruling members of the Society, in my lifetime, *would reconcile me, after such treatment, to a continuance in membership.*

the case of Thomas Foster, on his appeal against the Monthly Meeting of Ratcliff, and also the report of the committee of this Meeting, appointed to consider the said appeal, is of the judgment, that the report of the said committee, and the decision of Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, in disowning the said Thomas Foster, as a member of our religious Society, should be confirmed; and the judgment of the said Monthly Meeting, is confirmed accordingly." (y)

(y) How far the above reference to the "Report of the Committee," indicates a conscious feeling that the decision about to be pronounced, was not adequately supported by any thing which the respondents urged, I shall not determine. The intelligent reader will judge of this. But I may safely say, that the Committee's Report, inserted p. 253—254, cannot possibly furnish any other ground in justification of that decision, than the mere judgment of the Committee, that it "should be confirmed." And yet their first report, relative to this case, the grounds of which were open to examination, the Meeting had seen reason to reverse.

I may also add, that after the parties had been heard in the meeting, its subsequent judgment should have been wholly founded thereon. Instead of which, the above minute says nothing about hearing the respective parties, but without noticing the respondents, *or the case they made out*, states, that the Meeting had "deliberately considered" *my case, "and also the report of the committee."* But why refer to their judgment? I had appealed against that, and claimed the right, as the rules of the Society allowed, to have the case opened in the Meeting. What for? That the Meeting might exercise its own judgment, on hearing both sides, and not rest it on their committee's report. The character of the foregoing discussion, may however account for this inclination to rest such a decision, upon any thing, rather than upon the reasoning, and the evidence before the Meeting. For it appears that every person, who spoke in favour of confirming the decision of the Monthly Meeting forgot, or purposely avoided all mention of either of the grounds whereon that judgment was ostensibly founded.

I cannot, in justice to the Society, conclude this note, without expressing my firm conviction, that such a decision as this, would not have been confirmed by such an assembly, had custom established any effective mode of ascertaining the sense of the majority of its members. And till some alteration takes place in this respect, or, in the character of its leading disciplinarians, I shall consider the boasted privilege of appeal, as of no real value, and as a means rather of countenancing, than of counteracting, the usurpations of the few over

“The clerk is directed to send a copy of the above minute, to Ratcliff Monthly Meeting, and to the appellant.”

After a short pause, I requested a copy, not only of the minute recognizing the Meeting's decision, but of all the other minutes respecting my case, to which I observed, I thought myself justly entitled, and especially, as I could claim the right of an appeal against the Meeting's judgment, which I observed, I should not determine whether to exercise or not, till near the expiration of the time the rules allowed. I was informed the Meeting would consider my request, after the respondents and myself were withdrawn. (z)

I then told the Meeting I would, with their free consent, express a few words before we finally parted, but that I had no wish to press it, if thought improper.

John Eliot expressed a willingness to hear any thing I might wish to say, provided I would confine it within a small compass.

I replied, it will be but a very few words, and I may add, I believe those few words will not hurt the feelings of any Friend in the Meeting. Having sat down, I was soon afterwards informed, by the clerk, that I might consider myself at liberty to express what was upon my mind. I then rose, and said, I am well aware of the difficulty of bringing so many persons, as are now assembled, to one opinion on such a subject as the Meet-

the many. The occasional exercise of the right may nevertheless hasten the period, when the great principles of Christian liberty shall be so generally understood and respected, that every man, without offence to his brethren, *may speak the truth to his neighbour.*

(z) This request was granted, as will appear by the following minute. “The appellant and respondents were present, and heard the aforesaid minutes read; and the appellant having requested a copy of the minutes made respecting his case, the same is allowed *on the present occasion*, and the clerk is directed to furnish him with them, accordingly.”

ing has decided, or indeed, upon almost any other, which would admit of difference of sentiment. But I wish principally, for the sake of better reconciling those who might disapprove the Meeting's decision, to say, that so far as it related to me personally, and I was able to foresee its consequences on the remainder of my life, it would leave me, very nearly, where my own choice would have placed me, had the Monthly Meeting's decision been reversed. For, in that case, I had, upon deliberate consideration, come to a conclusion, very much, if not entirely, to absent myself from Meetings for Discipline, from a conviction, that however useful other Friends might be, in such a sphere of action, I should be more likely to give unintentional offence, than to be of any real service in those Meetings.

John Eliot said, he hoped I had not been hurt by what he had said about my confining myself to a few words, adding, in a very kind manner, that real religion did not consist in notions, and opinions. That Christ said unto the Jews, "*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.*" (John v. 40.) And on another occasion, "*No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*" (John vi. 44.) That the comforts and blessings of religion were only to be experienced by its influence on the heart, and on the affections.

I observed, that I thought myself called upon, in justice to that very respectable Friend, and to myself, to say, I was very far from being hurt by what he had said respecting me, and I trusted I should not be deprived of a participation of those blessings, which he had so feelingly and properly described. On which the good old man (who is since deceased) in the most friendly manner, expressed an inclination to offer me his hand, which he said, he hoped other Friends would also. I accepted the proffered expression of his goodwill, saying, I es-

teemed it a favour, I had almost said, an honour. The propriety of my using the latter phrase, he most courteously disclaimed. I then offered my hand to Joseph Gurney Bevan, the only Friend near me with whom I had ever had any personal controversy. We shook hands, when he rose, and expressed a few words, indicating, so far as I recollect their import, the propriety of cultivating a spirit of charity, one towards another, where we had different apprehensions, concerning the path in which we were required to walk. On my part, I assured the Meeting, I had no feeling of animosity towards a single Friend of that Quarterly Meeting. Any soreness of mind that I might have felt, in the course of the proceedings against me, was entirely effaced. Several Friends expressed their satisfaction at this declaration, when, without again sitting down, I withdrew.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

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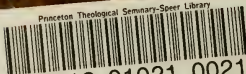
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